

1 SAMUEL

INTRODUCTION

The two Books of Samuel are classified as one book in the Jewish canon and should be considered as such. In the Latin Vulgate they are the first of four Books of Kings. Our title identifies the name of Samuel with these first two historical books. This is not because he is the writer, although we do believe that he is the writer of a good portion of it. It is because his story occurs first, and he figures prominently as the one who poured the anointing oil on both Saul and David. Samuel, then, is considered the writer of 1 Samuel up to the twenty-fifth chapter, which records his death. Apparently, Nathan and Gad completed the writing of these books. We learn this from [1Samuel 10:25](#) and [1Chronicles 29:29](#).

The Books of Samuel contain many familiar features. We read of the rise of the kingdom of Israel. There is also the story of Hannah and her little boy Samuel. Recorded in these books is the story of David and Goliath and the unusual and touching friendship of David and Jonathan. We have the account of King Saul's visit to the witch of En-dor, and [2Samuel 7](#) -- one of the great chapters of the Word of God -- gives us God's covenant with David. Finally, we have the record of David's great sin with Bathsheba and of the rebellion of his son Absalom.

In the Book of Judges we find that God used little people, many of whom had some serious fault or defect. Their stories are a great encouragement to those of us today who are little people. However, in 1 and 2 Samuel we meet some really outstanding folk: Hannah, Eli, Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, and David. We will become acquainted with each of them as we go through these books.

There are three subjects that may be considered themes of the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Prayer is the first. First Samuel opens with prayer, and 2 Samuel closes with prayer. And there's a great deal of prayer in between. A second theme is the rise of the kingdom. We have recorded in these books the change in the government of Israel from a theocracy to a kingdom. Of great significance is God's covenant with David given to us in [2Samuel 7](#). We will comment further on the kingdom in a moment. The third theme is the rise of the office of prophet. When Israel was a theocracy, God moved through the priesthood. However, when the priests failed and a king was anointed, God set the priests aside and raised up the prophets as His messengers. We will find that for the nation of Israel this resulted in deterioration rather than improvement.

The rise of the kingdom is of particular importance. First and Second Samuel record the origin of this kingdom, which continues as a very important subject throughout both the Old and New Testaments. The first message of the New Testament was the message of John the Baptist: ". . . Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" ([Matt. 3:2](#)). The kingdom of which he spoke is the kingdom of the Old Testament, the kingdom that begins in the Books of Samuel. This kingdom we find has a very historical basis, an earthly origin, and geographical borders. This kingdom has a king, and its subjects are real people.

God's chosen form of government is a kingdom ruled by a king. Yet to change the form of our government today would not solve our problems. It is not the form that is bad -- it is the people connected with it. But a kingdom is God's ideal, and He intends to put His King on the throne of this earth someday. When Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, rules this world it will be very unlike the job men are doing today. There will be no need for a poverty program, an ecological program, or for moral reforms. Rather, there will be righteousness and peace covering this earth like the waters cover the sea.

In these books the coming millennial Kingdom is foreshadowed in several respects; and in the setting up of the kingdom of Israel we observe three things that our world needs: (1) a king with power who exercises that power in righteousness; (2) a king who will rule in full dependence upon God; and (3) a king who will rule in full obedience to God. The Lord Jesus Christ, the coming King of kings, is the very One the world so desperately needs today.

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Chapter 1

THEME: Birth of Samuel; Samuel taken to Eli

This first Book of Samuel opens with the cry of a godly woman. While the people cry for a king, Hannah cries for a child. God builds the throne on a woman's cry. When a woman takes her exalted place, God builds her a throne.

Eli, the high priest, thinks Hannah is drunk as she prays before the tabernacle in Shiloh. When he discovers her true anxiety for a child, he blesses her. Samuel is born to Hannah and she brings him to Eli in fulfillment of her vow.

Now there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite:

And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children [[1Sam. 1:1-2](#)].

Elkanah had two wives. Perhaps you are thinking that God approved of this. No, my friend, as you read this record you will find that God did not approve of his having two wives. The fact that certain things are recorded in Scripture does not mean that God sanctions them. He is merely giving you the facts concerning history, persons, and events. For example, you will find that the lie of Satan is recorded in Scripture, but that does not mean God approves it! God showed His disapproval when Abraham took the maid Hagar as his second wife. In fact, the fruits of his son are still in existence. Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar, became the head of the Arab nation, and the Jews and Arabs are still at odds today. Because Elkanah had two wives, there was trouble in the family. This is evidence that God is not blessing them at this particular time.

And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were there [[1Sam. 1:3](#)].

This verse disturbed me for a long time. Why in the world did Samuel have to tell us that the sons of Eli were at the tabernacle? Later on we will find out. Going to worship God at the tabernacle was not all that you might suppose it to be. Actually it was a dangerous place to be, because these sons of Eli were "sons of Belial," or sons of the devil, if you please.

Some churches are the worst places you can be in and the most dangerous places for you. I have heard people say concerning the Upper Room, "How wonderful to have been there with Jesus!" Would it have been? Do you know who was in the Upper Room? Satan! He was not invited, but he was there. The record tells us that Satan entered into Judas. The Upper Room was the most dangerous place to be in Jerusalem that night. So, going to worship God had its difficulties in Samuel's day. Evil was present there in the persons of Eli's sons. It is interesting that this is mentioned at this juncture in 1 Samuel.

And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:

But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb [[1Sam. 1:4-5](#)].

Elkanah gave more to Hannah than he did to his other wife and all of their children. Why? He loved Hannah.

And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb [[1Sam. 1:6](#)].

Who was Hannah's adversary? It was Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife. They were not on speaking terms, and it was not a very pleasant home. Who told you that God approves of a man having two wives? They were having family trouble, and they did not have a counselor to whom they could go for help. Hannah was probably one of the most miserable persons in the world at this time, but she went to God in prayer.

And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.

Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.

And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head [[1Sam. 1:7-11](#)].

The expression "she was in bitterness of soul" describes her deep disappointment at not having a son. So she prayed for a son and promised God two things if her desire was granted: (1) He would be a priest in the Levitical service all the days of his life, and (2) she would make him a Nazarite unto God -- that is, he would be separated unto the service of God.

And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth.

Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken [[1Sam. 1:12-13](#)].

Eli was the high priest, and he saw this distraught woman come to the tabernacle and pray. He watched her mouth, saw her lips move, but could not hear any sound. Neither, apparently, could he read her lips. Notice his reaction, which is an insight into the conditions of that day. The sons of Eli drank and caroused there. Eli knew it but had shut his eyes to it -- he was an indulgent father. When Hannah prayed with such zeal in her heart, Eli thought she was drunk. Do you know why? Others who were drunk had come to the house of the Lord. This place of worship wasn't really the best place to come in that day.

And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.

And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD [[1Sam. 1:14-15](#)].

We don't see much praying like Hannah's today. Would people think you were drunk by the way you pray? Our prayers are very dignified. Hannah, not wanting Eli to have the wrong impression, said:

Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto.

Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.

And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad [[1Sam. 1:16-18](#)].

Eli realized his mistake and gave a prophetic blessing. That Hannah's "countenance was no more sad" indicates her confidence that God had heard and would answer her prayer.

Samuel's Birth (1:20)

Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD [[1Sam. 1:20](#)].

The name Samuel means "heard of God."

As I have said previously, this book of 1 Samuel opens with the cry of a godly woman. While the people are crying for a king, Hannah is crying out for a child. God builds the throne on a woman's cry. When a woman takes her exalted place, God builds her a throne.

What a contrast that is to our contemporary society. For the past few months we have heard nothing on the news but abortion, abortion, abortion. Here is Hannah who wants a child, and some women today do not want their children. Of course there are times when abortion is essential for the mother's life or even for the sake of the child, but that should be determined by expert, scientific consultation. However, the issue today is that people want to sin, but they do not want to pay the consequences for their sin. My position is that when people sin they should bear the fruit of their sin. If a child is conceived, that child should be born and should be the responsibility of those who brought him into the world. People are trying hard to get away from the fruit of sin. We need to understand this principle: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" ([Gal. 6:7](#)). We are living in a day of abortion. Hannah lived in a day when she wanted a son, and she dedicated that son unto the Lord. On her cry, God built a kingdom. What a tremendous tribute and wonderful monument to this woman's cry!

Samuel Taken To Eli (1:24-28)

And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young.

And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD.

For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there [[1Sam. 1:24-28](#)].

When Hannah took her offering to the Lord, she kept her vow to God. She said, "I have promised to bring this little one to the Lord, and here he is." Lent is definitely a poor word to describe Hannah's gift of Samuel to the Lord. Her decision to give him completely over to the service of the Lord is irrevocable.

Chapter 2

THEME: Hannah's prophetic prayer; Eli's evil sons; the boy Samuel in the tabernacle; Eli's sons judged

Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving is prophetic, as she mentions the Messiah for the first time.

Eli's sons are evil and unfit for the priest's office. An unnamed prophet warns Eli that his line will be cut off as high priest and God will raise up a faithful priest.

Hannah's Prophetic Prayer (2:1-11)

This is one of the great prayers of Scripture.

And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation [[1Sam. 2:1](#)].

A "horn" speaks of strength, something to hold on to. Hannah says "her strength," but she means her strength in the Lord. She is rejoicing over the fact that God has given her a son. She is victorious over those who ridiculed her for being barren, and she is rejoicing in her salvation. There has been a present deliverance.

Salvation comes in three tenses. (1) We have been saved. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath [right now] everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" ([John 5:24](#)). That means that God has delivered us from the guilt of sin by the death of Christ. That is justification, and it is past tense. (2) God has also delivered us from what the old theologians called "the pollution of sin," which is present deliverance. We are being saved. It is a deliverance from the weaknesses of the flesh, the sins of the flesh, the faults of the mind, and the actions of the will. This is the present deliverance that Hannah is talking about. It is sanctification and is in the present tense. (3) Finally there is the deliverance from death in the future -- not physical, but spiritual death. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" ([1John 3:2](#)). This is a future deliverance. We shall be saved. That will be glorification, which is future tense. We have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. Hannah was rejoicing in her salvation.

You remember that Jonah said, "Salvation is of the LORD" ([Jonah 2:9](#)). The psalmist repeats again and again that salvation is of the Lord. The great truth of salvation is that it

is by the grace of God. That is, we have been justified freely by His grace. The word freely means "without a cause." God found nothing in us to merit salvation. He found the explanation in Himself -- He loves us.

There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee:
neither is there any rock like our God [[1Sam. 2:2](#)].

The Lord is spoken of as a "rock" in the Old Testament. In the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ is called the "chief corner stone" ([1Pet. 2:6](#)). In [Matthew 16:18](#) Christ spoke of Himself when He said, "... upon this rock I will build my church." That Rock upon which Hannah rested is the same Rock upon which we rest today. There is no Rock like our God.

Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of
your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him
actions are weighed [[1Sam. 2:3](#)].

When we come to God in prayer, we need to be very careful, friends, that we do not let our pride cause us to stumble. We need to recognize our weakness, our insufficiency, and our inability, and the fact that we really have no claim on God. Sometimes we hear people ask, "Why didn't God hear my prayer?" To be quite frank, why should He? What claim do you have on Him? If you have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, you have a wonderful claim on God, and you can come to Him in the name of Jesus Christ. As His children we have Jesus' right and claim. However, we must remember that our prayers must be in accordance with His will.

The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled
are girded with strength.

They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they
that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and
she that hath many children is waxed feeble.

The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the
grave, and bringeth up [[1Sam. 2:4-6](#)].

The whole thought in this passage is that God gives life. As Job said, "the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" ([Job. 1:21](#)). Only God has the power to give life, and only He has the right to take it away. Until you and I have the power to give life, we have no right to take life away. So far only God has that power. Believe me, God will take the blame (if that is what you want to call it) for the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in [Acts 5](#). He does not apologize for the fact that He intends to judge the wicked. They will go down into death and be separated from God. God does not apologize for what He does. Why? Because this is His universe; we are His creatures; He is running the universe His way.

Not long ago I talked to a young university student who had received Christ as Savior but who was still unwilling to accept many things. I said to him, "If you do not like the way God has worked out His plan of salvation, and you don't like the things He is doing, you can go off somewhere and make your own universe, set up your own rules, and run it your own way. But as long as you are in God's universe, you are going to have to do

things His way." It is a most wonderful thing that you and I can bow to Him and come under His blessing if we are willing to do things His way.

The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up [[1Sam. 2:7](#)].

This verse brings up a question that many of us have: "Why are some people rich and some people poor?" I cannot understand why God has permitted some folks to be wealthy and others to be needy. I think I could distribute the wealth a little bit better than He has done it, I will be frank with you. But, you know, He did not leave that to me. That is His business and He will be able to explain it some day. I am going to wait for the explanation, because I know He has the answer.

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.

He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail [[1Sam. 2:8-9](#)].

Man, by his own effort, power, and strength, can never accomplish anything for God. Christians today need to recognize that fact. It is only what you and I do by the power of the Holy Spirit that will count. We need to learn to be dependent upon Him and rest in Him.

The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed [[1Sam. 2:10](#)].

This is one of the great verses of Scripture and the first one to use the name Messiah -- the word anointed is the Hebrew word Messiah. It is translated Christos in the Greek New Testament and comes to us as "Christ" in English. It is the title of the Lord Jesus. God is getting ready to set up a kingdom in Israel. Since Israel has rejected the theocracy, God is going to appoint them a king.

And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest [[1Sam. 2:11](#)].

It may sound as though Samuel was being left in a place of protection and shelter. The tabernacle should have been a place like that, but unfortunately it was not.

Eli's Evil Sons (2:12-17)

Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD [[1Sam. 2:12](#)].

Eli's boys were "sons of Belial," meaning sons of the Devil. They were not saved. Here they were, sons of the high priest, hanging around the tabernacle and actually ministering there!

There are many folk who send a son to a Christian school and feel very comfortable about it. I don't want you to misunderstand what I am saying -- I thank God for Christian schools. The problem is that since the boy is in a good place, they quit praying for him. That boy may be in the most dangerous place imaginable. Other parents feel secure in the fact that their son is in a fine church. My friend, that's where the Devil goes -- to those wonderful places! Remember that the Devil was in the Upper Room where Christ celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples. That room was the most dangerous place in Jerusalem that night because the Devil was present. We need to remember that the boy who goes to a good church or a good school still needs prayer. He may be in a dangerous place.

This little fellow Samuel is in a dangerous place, and his mother is going to continue to pray for him, you may be sure of that.

And the priests' custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand;

And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh, unto all the Israelites that came thither.

Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw.

And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force [[1Sam. 2:13-16](#)].

They were totally dishonest in the Lord's work. They were running one of the first religious rackets.

Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD [[1Sam. 2:17](#)].

Their dishonesty caused many people to turn from God. The Israelites saw what Eli's sons were doing at the tabernacle and, instead of being drawn closer to the Lord, they were driven away. Friends, we need to be careful about how we live our lives and how we run our churches. This idea of shutting our eyes to sin in the church and trying to cover it up just drives people away from God. That is one of the protests of our young people today. Recently I have had the privilege of seeing over one hundred of these young people turn to Christ. I have talked with them and have seen them in action. They are against the organized church because of the hypocrisy that is in it. That disturbs me because I know it is there -- just as it was in the tabernacle in Eli's day.

The Boy Samuel In The Tabernacle (2:18-21)

But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.

Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice [[1Sam. 2:18-19](#)].

While Samuel is growing up under the influence of Eli's dishonest sons, his mother does not forget him. Hannah loves her little boy. She had promised to give him to the Lord, and she kept her word. And every year she makes a coat for him and gives it to him. There is nothing quite as tender and loving as this type of thing. I think one of the greatest joys that Mrs. McGee and I have is in selecting clothes, a little suit or something, for our grandson. Nothing is as satisfying as that. My heart goes out to Hannah as we see her here.

And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home.

And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD [[1Sam. 2:20-21](#)].

God was good to Hannah. She had five other children, but she never forgot Samuel during all those years. Every year she made him a little coat. And, in spite of the bad environment of the tabernacle, Samuel grew before the Lord.

Eli's Sons Judged (2:22-35)

Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation [[1Sam. 2:22](#)].

Eli was an indulgent father who shut his eyes to the sins of his sons. Notice their awful, gross immorality "and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation"! There is a great deal of talk today about what is called the "new morality." I think Eli's sons beat the crowd today in the new morality. Actually, it was not even new in their day; it goes back to the time of the Flood.

And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people [[1Sam. 2:23](#)].

The actions of Eli's sons were an open scandal in Israel, and all Eli did was give his boys a gentle slap on the wrist!

Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the LORD's people to transgress [[1Sam. 2:24](#)].

The people were doing what the priests were doing. Eli's sons were leading the Israelites into sin. Instead of taking positive steps to correct the situation, Eli gently rebukes them. He was an indulgent father.

If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them.

And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men [[1Sam. 2:25-26](#)].

Even in this bad environment, Samuel is growing in favor with God and man. He is dedicated to God and backed by his mother's interest and prayer. God is going to use him.

And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house?

And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?

Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? [[1Sam. 2:27-29](#)].

God sent a prophet to old Eli who told him that God was through with him as the high priest. No longer would God move through the priest. Instead, God was now raising up a priest-prophet. It was going to be Samuel. He would minister for the Lord, and his office would be that of a prophet.

Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed [[1Sam. 2:30](#)].

Let's be very careful in our lives to honor God. [Psalm 107:1-2](#) says, "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." The redeemed of the Lord need to say so today.

Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.

And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.

And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age.

And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them [[1Sam. 2:31-34](#)].

All of the prophecies mentioned in these verses came to pass. As we move through the Word of God, we shall see these things happen.

And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever [[1Sam. 2:35](#)].

Who is this verse talking about? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. In Hannah's prayer, you remember, He is mentioned as the King, the Messiah, who is to come. He has been mentioned by Moses as a prophet and now in 1 Samuel is mentioned as a priest. The Lord Jesus Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King. He is the only One who ever fulfilled all of these offices.

Chapter 3

THEME: Call of Samuel

The story of God's calling of Samuel is ordinarily reserved for children. Let's bring it out of the nursery into the adult department. Not only is it a beautiful story, but it marks one of the great transitional periods in Scripture: the change from theocracy to monarchy, from priest to king. There is a total of four calls to Samuel: the first and second calls were to salvation ([v. 7](#)); the last two calls were to service ([v. 10](#)). As Alice in Wonderland, ostensibly written by Carroll for Alice Liddell (a friend's child), was a philosophical indictment against the social order of his day, so the story of Samuel's call is much more than a delightful story for children. It initiates a drastic change in the form of government. The period of the judges is over, and no longer will God move through the priest. He is now raising up a priest-prophet. Samuel will minister for the Lord, but his office will be that of a prophet. It is he who will pour the anointing oil on both kings, Saul and David. God will never speak directly to a king but will speak only through a prophet.

And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision [[1Sam. 3:1](#)].

I want to note the word child. Samuel was not a wee child. The historian Josephus says he was twelve years old. He probably was a teen-ager. Samuel was a young man, and he ministered unto the Lord before Eli. A four-year-old child would not be serving the Lord in the tabernacle.

This verse tells us that "the word of the Lord was precious." That means it was scarce. God was not revealing Himself at this particular time. He is just beginning to move when He calls Samuel to be a prophet. God is moving from the use of the judge and priest to the use of the prophet. The prophet becomes the spokesman to and for the king.

And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;

And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep [[1Sam. 3:2-3](#)].

It was the duty of the priests to take care of the lamp in the tabernacle. They were to put oil in it and see that it was kept burning. Eli was old, his eyesight dim, and the lamp was about to go out.

That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I.

And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down [[1Sam. 3:4-5](#)].

Eli thought that Samuel was dreaming and told him to go back to bed.

And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again [[1Sam. 3:6](#)].

We need to note here that God's first two calls to Samuel were calls to salvation.

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him [[1Sam. 3:7](#)].

Samuel did not know the Lord. God was calling him to salvation. What is the age of accountability? Whatever it is, Samuel had reached it, and God is now going to hold him responsible. In the Book of Numbers a man was not able to go to war until he was twenty. The Levites did not begin their service until they were twenty-five years old, and the priests began to serve at age thirty. When Israel turned back to wander in the wilderness because of unbelief, only those who were under twenty years of age were allowed to live and go into the Promised Land. I do not know exactly how old Samuel was, but we can be certain he was not a toddler. Is twenty the age of accountability? I do not know. I am merely suggesting that it is much older than many people think.

The question has always been, "Would God have called Samuel a fifth, sixth, seventh, or fiftieth time?" I do believe with all my heart that there is a time to be saved. It has been expressed like this:

There is a time, I know not when;
A place, I know not where;
Which marks the destiny of men
To heaven or despair.
How long may men go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end, and where begins
The confines of despair?
One answer from those skies is sent:
"Ye who from God depart,
While it is called today, repent,
And harden not your heart."
-- Author unknown

Apparently there will come a day when one is not able to turn to God.

When Hermann Goering was placed in prison at the time of his trial, and later when he was to be executed, the prison chaplain had a long interview with him. The chaplain emphasized the necessity of preparing himself to meet God. In the course of the

conversation, Goering ridiculed certain Bible truths and refused to accept the fact that Christ died for sinners. His was a conscious denial of the power of the blood. "Death is death," was the substance of his last words. As the chaplain reminded him of the hope of his little daughter meeting him in heaven, he replied, "She believes in her manner, I in mine." The chaplain was very discouraged when he left. Less than an hour later he heard that Hermann Goering had committed suicide. God called this man, and he refused the call.

God may call many times, but there apparently comes a day when man's heart is hardened. [Proverbs 29:1](#) says, "He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Now I do not believe you can commit an unpardonable sin -- that is, that you can do something today which cannot be forgiven by God tomorrow. But, does God withdraw His grace? No, he will never do that. But men can resist and rebel and reject until their conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron. Men like Cain, Balaam, Samson, Korah, and Ahab all reached a day when they turned their backs against God. [Acts 24:25](#) says of Felix, the Roman procurator before whom Paul was arraigned, "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." King Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" ([Acts 26:28](#)). Christ saved one thief that men need not despair, but He saved only one that men would not presume ([Luke 23:39-43](#)).

And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child.

Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth [[1Sam. 3:8-10](#)].

These verses contain the third and fourth calls to Samuel, the calls to service.

And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end [[1Sam. 3:11-12](#)].

When God says something, it is the same as done. In the Old Testament we have what has been called "prophetic tense." It is a past tense, but it speaks of the future. God speaks of things that have not yet happened as if they had already taken place. When God says something is going to happen, it is going to happen. God speaks to Samuel in these verses and tells him that He is about to move against the house of Eli.

Now this boy Samuel is loyal to Eli to the very end. He did not attempt to undermine him. He went to Eli and told him everything God had said to him. I want to say that if

you are in God's service today and serving under some other man, be loyal to him. Don't tell me that you can be loyal to Christ and be disloyal to God's man who is above you. Oh, how loyalty is needed today!

And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD [[1Sam. 3:21](#)].

How did God reveal Himself? By the Word. God today is also revealing Himself through His Word. He is illuminating by His Spirit the pages of Scripture. That is how you and I come to know Him, and to know Him is life eternal.

Chapter 4

THEME: God's judgment on Eli and his sons fulfilled

Israel, without consulting Samuel, went out to battle against the Philistines, which led to defeat. Then they brought the ark of the covenant into battle, thinking its presence would bring victory. This reveals the superstitious paganism of the people who thought there was some merit in an object. The ark was captured, the two sons of Eli were slain, and Eli died upon hearing the news.

The Ark Is Captured By The Philistines (4:1-8)

This chapter is a dark picture indeed. We see the spiritual condition of Israel at this particular time. God is going to bring to a conclusion the thing He said He would do to the house of Eli.

And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek.

And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.

And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies [[1Sam. 4:1-3](#)].

This section of Scripture gives us a revelation of Israel's superstition and just how far they are from God. It shows us how strong their self-sufficiency and selfishness are. With no thought of seeking God's direction, they go out to battle against the Philistines. What happens? They are defeated. What is lacking? They think perhaps they should have taken the ark with them into battle. Knowing the history of the ark -- that as it had been carried down into the Jordan River, the water had been cut off so that Israel could cross over -- they took the ark of the covenant into battle. The thought was that its presence would bring victory. My friend, this reveals the superstition and paganism of these people who thought there was some merit in the object. The merit was not in that box because God

was not in that box. You cannot get God into a box! The merit was in the presence and person of God.

In church work today many people are equally as superstitious. They think that God, as it were, is in a box. They say, "Look at this method. It is a nice little package deal. It is success in a box. This method will solve our problem." So many people are moving in that direction today. My friend, that is not being spiritual. That is being superstitious. The merit is in Christ. Success is determined by whether or not we are with Him. That is all important.

So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again [[1Sam. 4:4-5](#)].

Israel is going into battle. They send to Shiloh for the ark of the covenant. Because Hophni and Phinehas are "paid preachers," they are going to do what they are told to do. When the ark is brought into the camp, the Israelites have a great rally. They think they are getting somewhere spiritually, but this is nothing in the world but idolatry. They are worshipping a box -- not God. Let us be careful in the ceremonies and rituals of our church. Are we worshipping a church? Are we worshipping a man? Are we worshipping a method? Are we worshipping a particular place? Or are we really worshipping the living and true God today?

And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp.

And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore.

Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness [[1Sam. 4:6-8](#)].

The Philistines understand that the ark of the covenant has come into the camp of the Israelites. They are afraid for they say, "God is come into the camp." To them the ark is an idol. This shows that the Philistines are both superstitious and ignorant. Although they have heard of His power, they are certainly ignorant of the living and true God.

Eli Dies And The Glory Of God Departs From Israel (4:12-18)

The Philistines and the Israelites fight, and Israel loses the battle. There is a great slaughter of the Israelites, the ark of God is captured, and Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are slain.

And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out [[1Sam. 4:12-13](#)].

Old Eli, with all his faults, was God's high priest, and he had a real concern for the things of God.

And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son? [[1Sam. 4:14-16](#)].

When news of Israel's terrible defeat reached the city, a great wail arose. Eli, old and blind, asks the reason for it.

And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years [[1Sam. 4:17-18](#)].

This man maintains his composure when he is told about the death of his sons, but when he learns that the ark of God has been captured, he falls backward and dies. He was a big fat fellow. Perhaps he suffered a heart attack. Although he was a weak, indulgent father, I believe he was God's man.

Eli's death brings Samuel into the position of being God's spokesman.

Chapter 5

THEME: Judgment of God upon Philistines

Chapters 5 and 6 describe the experience of the Philistines with the captured ark of the covenant in their possession. They learned there was no merit in the ark -- it was by no means a good-luck charm. Because of it ". . . the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them" ([1Sam. 5:6](#)). Their idol Dagon was toppled and broken; the men developed a strange illness and many died. Deadly destruction followed the ark wherever it was taken. The Philistines, fearing for their lives, returned the ark to Israel, carried on a cart to a field of Beth-shemesh.

And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him [[1Sam. 5:1-4](#)].

When the Philistines captured the ark, they thought they had something good in their hands; but, every time they set it up in the house of their god Dagon, the idol would fall over. Now I want to submit something to you that I don't think you will find in any commentary. When the presence of the ark of the Lord in the house of Dagon caused the idol to fall over and nothing was left but the stump, I believe this reveals God's sense of humor. God was revealing to the Philistines that their god was powerless in His presence. I think this shows that the Lord has a real sense of humor in doing this sort of thing, because it really annoyed the Philistines. They soon saw that there was no merit in their having the ark. In fact, it was a very real danger to them.

But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god [[1Sam. 5:6-7](#)].

Thinking these calamities might not be coincidental, they send the ark to another city of the Philistines.

They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither.

And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people [[1Sam. 5:8-10](#)].

I do not mean to be irreverent but everyone was passing the buck.

Chapter 6

Finally there was a meeting of the lords of the Philistines and they decided to send the ark back to Israel. God had sent judgment upon the Philistines. The Philistines had one question, "What shall we do with Israel's ark?"

And the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months [[1Sam. 6:1](#)].

Again, I do not want to be irreverent, but having the ark was like having a hot potato. Whenever the ark was put near the idol of Dagon, it fell over. All that was left was a stump, and that is not a very satisfactory object to worship; an idol is bad enough! So the people of Gath had it and they didn't want it; so they sent it to Ekron and they, too, wanted to get rid of it.

And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you.

Then said they, What shall be the trespass offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords [[1Sam. 6:2-4](#)].

The Philistines wanted to get rid of the ark, but they were not sure how to go about it. Therefore they consulted with the priests and diviners who told them not to send the ark of the God of Israel away empty. They were to send an offering, and that offering speaks of the vileness of the Philistine worship. Many people wonder why God put the Philistines out of His land. The Promised Land was right at the crossroads of the world, and those who occupied it would influence the people of the world. God put them out because of the vileness of their worship. They had turned completely from God. Here again God is giving them an opportunity to turn to Him.

The Philistine offering consisted of five golden emerods (hemorrhoids, possibly, tumors or boils) and five golden mice.

And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the images of their emerods [[1Sam. 6:11](#)].

Notice that when the Philistines returned the ark to Israel, they put it on a cart. Nothing is going to happen to them for putting it on a cart. Do you know why? Very candidly, they did not know any better. God is not going to hold them responsible for this act. But Israel knew better, and we will see that God judged the Israelites because of the way they handled the ark. Why the difference? They knew better, friend.

And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh [[1Sam. 6:12](#)].

The cows which were hitched to the cart were obviously going against their natural instinct by leaving their calves at home. This was convincing proof to the Philistines that their troubles had been caused by an act of God.

And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it.

And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt offering unto the LORD.

And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold were, and put them on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD [[1Sam. 6:13-15](#)].

The Israelites will not accept anything, you see, for themselves from the Philistines. They are, of course, to be commended for that.

And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day [[1Sam. 6:16](#)].

The Philistines see that the ark is received back, and they are glad to get it off their hands.

Now we see that, when the ark was returned to the Israelites, they immediately had problems with it.

And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter [[1Sam. 6:19](#)].

The men of Beth-shemesh do that which God had strictly forbidden. That ark belonged in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. It was to be seen only by the high priest -- even he was permitted to enter before it only once a year. When the ark was transported, as it was on the wilderness march, it was carefully and reverently covered. The Philistines did not know these things, but the Israelites did know.

And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us? [[1Sam. 6:20](#)].

It is not that they looked in the ark and saw something that they should not have seen. That is not the point. The ark was a box. That is all it ever was. The point is that it was at

the ark in the Holy of Holies that God met with His people. He is not meeting with them now. They have turned from Him. Their rebellion and blasphemy are revealed in their disobedience. Because of this, God brings judgment upon them.

And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD; come ye down, and fetch it up to you [[1Sam. 6:21](#)].

Now in a superstitious way they want to get rid of the ark. They send messengers to Kirjath-jearim saying, "You come and get it." In other words, Israel is not ready to receive the ark. God's people are not prepared to return to Him.

Chapter 7

THEME: Samuel leads in revival; victory at Eben-ezer

After twenty years, Israel is prepared to receive the ark. Israel turns from Baalim and Ashtaroth to serve the Lord.

Samuel Leads In Revival (7:1-6)

And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD.

And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD [[1Sam. 7:1-2](#)].

After twenty years the Israelites began to turn to God and away from Baalim and Ashtaroth. They have come to the place where they want God.

In this day in which we are living there is a renewed interest in the Word of God. I rejoice in this, because it is my firm conviction that God's people must get back to the Bible. I believe that all sixty-six books -- all the way from Genesis to Revelation -- are the Word of God. I believe in the Bible's integrity and inerrancy and in the fact that we need to get back to its teachings. We have been a long time getting back to God's Word. Progress has been slow. How many more years will it take? Many people today are getting very tired of listening to politicians who make promises, promises, promises, and then don't fulfill them. I want to say in their behalf that they cannot fulfill them -- yet they promise. We also have all kinds of new nostrums coming from college professors and leaders in every field. There is only one thing wrong: they won't work. Maybe in desperation America will turn to God. That is what happened to Israel after twenty years.

And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only [[1Sam. 7:3-4](#)].

This is actually the beginning of Samuel's great ministry. Israel was deep in idolatry. They had turned from the living and true God. They had been defeated in so many battles that it had become old hat to them, and they were extremely discouraged. They were beginning to lament after the Lord. We, too, need to get back to the Lord. There is a hunger in the hearts of many people who are saying, "We are tired of eating the husks that pigs eat in the far country. We want to get back to the Father's house." Well, they have to come through the door of the Word of God.

And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD.

And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh [[1Sam. 7:5-6](#)].

Samuel is not only the prophet of Israel, he is also the judge of the nation. Here we find Israel turning from false gods to the true God. This man Samuel is praying for them, and they confess their sins. This is the way back for God's people. I do not think there is another way back. I hear about all kinds of methods today that will be blessed by God. Let me put it right down in bold letters and tell it like it is. What God's people need to do is to go to God and confess their sins. They need to see themselves in the light of the Word of God. If we really see ourselves, we see that we have come short of the glory of God ([Rom. 3:23](#)); and then we can be assured that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, will keep on cleansing us from all sin ([1John 1:9](#)).

Victory At Eben-ezer (7:8-17)

And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him.

And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car [[1Sam. 7:8-11](#)].

God gave Israel a great victory, and it was the first one they had had for a long time. These people had lapsed into idolatry; they had been in sullen rebellion. When they began to turn to God, Samuel exacted a confession of sin and a promise to return to God. As a result God gave them a signal victory over the Philistines.

Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us [[1Sam. 7:12](#)].

The name Eben-ezer means "stone of help." "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." It was also a stone of remembrance, looking back to the past. It was a stone of recognition, a stone for the present. It was a stone of revelation, a stone for the future. "Hitherto [up to this point, up to the present time] God has helped us."

It is customary for us to look back over the past. Remember what the Lord said through Paul to the Philippians: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" ([Phil. 1:6](#)). Friend, has God brought you to this point? Is He leading you today? Is He guiding you? If He has, you can say, "Hitherto has the Lord helped me." Since He has helped you up to this moment, He will continue to do that.

God has given us memories so that we can have roses in December. As memory plays on the keyboard of the past, I am sure that all of us can say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Joshua could say, ". . . as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" ([Josh. 24:15](#)). David could say, "O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy" ([Ps. 107:1-2](#)). I personally want to say that oh, the Lord is good! He is the One who has helped us and will help us.

A businessman said sometime ago, "You know, the use of time might be likened to the terminology of banking. Yesterday is a canceled check, tomorrow is a promissory note, but today is cash. Spend it wisely." Do you recognize God in your life? That is what Samuel meant by that Eben-ezer stone. It was a stone of revelation. It not only meant "hitherto," it also meant "henceforth." "The LORD is my shepherd," said David; then looking into the future, "I shall not want" ([Ps. 23:1](#)). Someone once said, "I am very interested in the future because I expect to spend the rest of my life there, and I want to be reasonably sure of what kind of a future it is going to be." "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" ([Rom. 8:28](#)). Dr. R. A. Torrey always said that [Romans 8:28](#) was a soft pillow for a tired heart. We all need an Eben-ezer stone. I trust that you have one in your life.

So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel [[1Sam. 7:13](#)].

I think it can be said that from this time on the Philistines were never again as dominant and formidable a foe as they had been before the battle. This was a significant battle, and a stone now stands in memory of it. The stone was about three or four miles north by northwest of Jerusalem, in sight of the city.

And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD [[1Sam. 7:15-17](#)].

This is the story. Samuel is a prophet and a judge of Israel. He is a circuit judge. He goes from Bethel to Gilgal to Mizpeh and back to Ramah, all areas north of Jerusalem. He "judged Israel in all those places."

Chapter 8

THEME: Israel rejects God and demands a king

[Hosea 13:11](#) can be written over the remainder of 1 and 2 Samuel: "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath."

Samuel was a great judge and a man of God. He was brought up in the tabernacle where he saw the wickedness of Eli's sons and how God judged them. Yet notice what Samuel does.

And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel [[1Sam. 8:1](#)].

Samuel made his own sons judges to succeed him, although they were unworthy and incompetent for the job. This act was a mistake. Samuel was a great judge, a wonderful prophet, and a great man of God -- but he was a failure as a father just as Eli had been.

Now the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beer-sheba.

And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment [[1Sam. 8:2-3](#)].

These were Samuel's sons. They were totally dishonest. Strange, isn't it? Today we see so much of that. Many pastors have said to me, "Why is it that you can have a godly family in your church and the son or daughter can become a dissolute vagrant or go on drugs?" Many times there is no explanation for it. Well, Samuel was a great man, God's man, and look what his sons did.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah,

And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations [[1Sam. 8:4-5](#)].

The people of Israel ask for a king. They are influenced, of course, by the surrounding nations. They give as their reason Samuel's advanced age and the waywardness of his sons.

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them [[1Sam. 8:6-7](#)].

The fact that Samuel had made his sons judges gives these people an excuse to ask for a king. Undoubtedly this was a heartbreak to Samuel. God comforts him with the assurance that Israel's rejection is not of him but of God himself. Samuel's sons are the excuse, but rejection of God's sovereignty is the real reason.

Then Samuel warns Israel what it will be like to have a king. He tells them that a king will reign over them, take their sons for soldiers, their daughters for cooks and maidservants, and part of their fields, vineyards, oliveyards, and animals for himself. He warns them that eventually they will cry out in their distress and that in that day the Lord will not hear them.

Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city [[1Sam. 8:19-22](#)].

The children of Israel are going to have their way. God is going to give them a king. What was true of Israel in the days of Moses is still true. "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" ([Ps. 106:15](#)). God will grant Israel's desire for a king, but it will not be to their advantage. God's guidance of the nation will be indirectly through the prophet. As we shall see, God will not speak directly to the king, but still through the prophet who will convey God's word to the king. The king will accept it or reject it as he chooses.

CHAPTERS 9 AND 10

Chapter 9

THEME: Saul is chosen as king; Saul is anointed as king

Saul Is Chosen As King (9:1-27)

Chapter 9 begins the second major section of the book of 1 Samuel. The first section dealt with Samuel; now the emphasis shifts to Saul. Saul is one of those strange individuals whom we encounter in the Word of God. Like Balaam, it is difficult to interpret him. Both in the Old and New Testaments there are several strange characters who move across the pages of Scripture in semidarkness. They come out, as it were, into the light but, like the groundhog, they see their shadow and move back into the darkness again.

Saul is not a king when we first meet him. In fact, I do not think he ever was a king in the true sense of the word.

Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power [[1Sam. 9:1](#)].

Kish was Saul's father, and he belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. Recalling the history of the twelve sons of Jacob in Genesis, the tribe originated with the youngest son, Benjamin, a favorite of his father. His mother had died at his birth and, as she was passing, she named him Benoni, "son of my sorrow." But when Jacob looked at the little fellow, he said, "No, he is going to be the son of my right hand," and he named him Benjamin. The boy was the favorite son and was protected by his brothers. Then in the Book of Judges, the tribe was decimated because of an episode of gross sin that took place in the tribe. It is from this tribe, Benjamin, that the first king comes.

And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people [[1Sam. 9:2](#)].

This boy Saul was handsome. Physically he looked like a king, but he was an actor that played a part. He was not a king at heart. The people, however, were choosing their king by his outward appearance and not according to his character.

It is this emphasis on "outward appearance" that places our nation in such a dangerous position today. The most dangerous enemy we have is the television. The man that will ultimately control this country is the man who has a good television appearance. Why? Because we choose men by the way they look and the way they talk rather than by their character. If only we had an X-ray -- instead of the television -- that would reveal the true character of a man!

The children of Israel wanted a king, and they liked Saul. He was handsome. He was tall. He was fine looking. There wasn't a more kingly-looking man in the nation. He could have been both a television and a movie star. He looked the part and could play the part; the trouble was he was not a king at heart.

And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses [[1Sam. 9:3](#)].

I know that the Lord has a sense of humor. You just cannot miss it because it is in too many places in the Word of God. Saul is out looking for the asses of his father, and the asses of Israel are looking for a king. They are bound to get together, friend, and they do. The Lord must smile when a thing like this takes place. What a commentary on the human race!

And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us [[1Sam. 9:5](#)].

Saul and his servant had looked all around for his father's animals and could not find them. Finally Saul said, "Let's go home because we are going to get lost too, and they will have to send out a search party for us."

And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: that will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way [[1Sam. 9:6-8](#)].

Here is a little explanation inserted by the Spirit of God which is helpful:

(Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.) [[1Sam. 9:9](#)].

There is a change of names. Men who dealt in necromancy and spiritism were called "seers." God wanted a different name for His man, and so he is called a "prophet." This actually makes Samuel the first of the order of prophets. Although Moses is called a prophet, Samuel is the first of the order of prophets. Samuel, of course, is the man Saul and his servant are talking about.

And they went up into the city: and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place [[1Sam. 9:14](#)].

This does not mean that Samuel opposed Saul and his servant; it simply means that he met them on the way.

Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying [[1Sam. 9:15](#)].

The question is often asked, "Just how did God communicate in the Old Testament when it says, 'The Lord spake'?" I think that when it says the Lord spake, He spoke. That is the way communication came. It came by words. It is the words of Scripture that are inspired, not the thoughts. We are given an inkling of how God communicated when it says, "Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear. . . ." What I hear in my ears are words. That is the only thing that makes sense and that, of course, is what Samuel heard.

To-morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me [[1Sam. 9:16](#)].

Many times God answers our request when it is not the best thing for us. When we keep crying to the Lord for whatever it is we want, finally He does for us what He did for Israel -- He grants our request. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they cried for meat. God gave them meat, but He sent "leanness unto their souls." That is why

prayer should be made in the name of Christ, which means that it must be according to His will and for His glory. All requests should hinge on that very important matter.

And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people [[1Sam. 9:17](#)].

God granted their request and gave them a king. Saul was a man that impressed even Samuel. We find out that Samuel regarded him highly and regretted the fact that he did not make good.

Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is.

And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to-day, and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart.

And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? [[1Sam. 9:18-20](#)].

Saul was actually not God's choice. That is, He gave Israel the sort of man He knew they wanted. As Saul moved among the people, they saw that he was tall, handsome, and looked like a king. When they asked for a king, God granted their request.

And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me? [[1Sam. 9:21](#)].

Saul sounds a great deal like Gideon in this verse. He sounds very humble. Gideon said, "... Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Jud. 6:15). Gideon was saying, "You can't get any smaller than I am." Gideon was telling the truth. He was a coward and frightened to death. Israel was at war and badly outnumbered. Saul had no reason to be afraid. Israel was not at war. He had been out looking for his father's longeared donkeys that had already been found. His mission was accomplished. The point is that there was nothing to prompt a speech like he gave. I personally feel that his was a false humility. I think Saul felt very much like he was the one who could be king.

And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons [[1Sam. 9:22](#)].

Apparently Samuel called a small group of leaders together.

And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee.

And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set it before thee, and eat: for unto this time hath it been kept for

thee since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house.

And they arose early: and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad.

And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God [[1Sam. 9:23-27](#)].

We have here the formality they went through. Saul ate with Samuel that day, and they had a conference.

Chapter 10

Saul Is Anointed As King (10:1-25)

Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? [[1Sam. 10:1](#)].

Samuel anoints Saul as king and then kisses him, which was probably an act demonstrating his personal affection for Saul.

When thou art departed from me to day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son? [[1Sam. 10:2](#)].

As far as Kish is concerned, his son Saul is lost. But Saul is engaged in serious business. Samuel has anointed him king near the tomb of Rachel, which is in the territory of Benjamin near Bethlehem.

After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy [[1Sam. 10:5](#)].

This is what Saul is to encounter on his way back home.

And the spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man [[1Sam. 10:6](#)].

Here again we have a question: Was Saul converted? Is this verse the proof of his conversion? Certainly it is not a final proof.

I do not believe that he was converted. If I sound like I am prejudiced against Saul, I will tell you why. It is not because of the material we have already covered concerning him but what is coming that makes me believe that Saul was not genuine, and certainly not genuinely converted at all.

Someone is bound to say, "But the Spirit of God came upon Saul and he was a different man." Yes, but it does not say that he became a new man. After all, didn't the Spirit of God come upon Balaam? And we have no proof that he was converted. What about Judas? Christ sent out twelve disciples, and we are told that all of them performed miracles. Did Judas perform miracles? Certainly he did. Would you say that Judas was converted? So let us withhold making a final decision about Saul -- although I seem to have already made one.

And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day [[1Sam. 10:9](#)].

When Saul left Samuel, I think Samuel watched him walk away and said, "My, he is a fine fellow." But even a prophet can be wrong. The prophet Nathan was wrong when he told David to build God a house. God had to intervene, and Nathan had to correct himself. Samuel was wrong about Saul. As he looked at this young man Saul, he saw a big, husky, fine-looking fellow. He would have been able to play in the line of any professional football team. But he was no king at all.

And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? [[1Sam. 10:10-11](#)].

The Spirit of God came upon Saul and he prophesied. Everyone who had known him before knew that something had happened to him. They asked, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" God was giving Saul an opportunity. God never withheld anything from him, and yet he failed.

And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not [[1Sam. 10:16](#)].

He kept quiet about that.

And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh;

And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you:

And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands [[1Sam. 10:17-19](#)].

When the children of Israel asked for a king and took Saul, it meant they were turning their backs upon God. We need to note that their reception of Saul as king meant their rejection of God.

When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found.

Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff [[1Sam. 10:21-22](#)].

When the time came for Samuel to introduce Saul to the crowd as their king, he could not find him. This great big fellow, Saul, acted just like a little child. He ran and hid, and they had to find him and bring him out. Again, in my judgment, this is an evidence of false modesty. The anointing oil has been poured upon him, and if he is given an opportunity to be king and serve God, then let him step out in the open and act like a king.

And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? and all the people shouted, and said, God save the king [[1Sam. 10:24](#)].

And God save the people also! This was the first time this cry "God save the king!" was uttered. As you know, it is still used in modern England.

Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house [[1Sam. 10:25](#)].

"Then Samuel told" the children of Israel about "the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book." On the basis of this we believe that Samuel wrote the first part of the book of 1 Samuel.

CHAPTERS 11 AND 12

Chapter 11

THEME: Saul's victory over the Ammonites; transfer of authority from Samuel to Saul

Saul's Victory Over The Ammonites (11:1-15)

In the previous chapter I said some rather harsh things about King Saul, although I did not seem to have sufficient grounds at the time. I had only a strong suspicion that he was not genuine. I felt that he would have made a good actor but not a good king, even though he had a good beginning.

Then Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee.

And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel.

And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if there be no man to save us, we will come out to thee [[1Sam. 11:1-3](#)].

This was a very strong, ugly demand made by Nahash on the men of Jabesh. They needed deliverance.

Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.

And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

And the spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly.

And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent [[1Sam. 11:4-7](#)].

Notice how Saul identifies himself with Samuel. I do not think at this particular time that Saul's name could have stood alone. When Saul asked the people to come and linked his name with Samuel's name, however, the people came. They also came because of two main fears. They were afraid of Saul and also fearful of what the Ammonites might do to them.

And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the minds of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together [[1Sam. 11:11](#)].

Saul divided his men into three companies. Then the Israelites went after the Ammonites and slew and scattered them so badly that not two of them were left together. Each Ammonite that survived fled by himself.

And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death [[1Sam. 11:12](#)].

Some of the Israelites opposed the idea of having Saul as their king. Samuel ignored that opposition until the nation was united in favor of Saul. Saul's leadership in dealing with the Ammonites took care of the resistance.

And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to-day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.

Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there.

And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly [[1Sam. 11:13-15](#)].

Now all of Israel accepts Saul as king.

You may be saying, "Well, now, preacher, you see that you were wrong. You were prejudiced against King Saul, and look, he is making good!" Yes, he certainly started off like a great king, but let's keep reading. It is too bad that his story doesn't end here.

Chapter 12

Transfer Of Authority From Samuel To Saul (12:1-25)

Chapter 12 begins with the swan song of Samuel.

And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you [[1Sam. 12:1](#)].

This is Samuel's swan song, his final speech. He was a remarkable man, and he was now succeeded by Saul. Although Israel's choice was a king rather than God, He would still bless the people if they would obey. That is evident. Saul was king, and God would give him every opportunity.

And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day [[1Sam. 12:2](#)].

Samuel was brought up in the tabernacle. His life was spent in a "fish bowl" -- he was always in public view. Probably no man ever had quite the public life that Samuel had. Many times in our age a man moves into public life and the people accept him. Then suddenly someone finds out about his black past, and the hero comes falling to the ground. Such was not the case with Samuel. He was brought as a little boy, by his mother, to the tabernacle. He lived his entire life before the people. Then he put in this sad note of a fond father, "My sons are with you." In other words, "Why didn't you accept them?" Samuel tried to put them in position but God would not have them. They were boys who were not acceptable to Him.

Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of

whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you [[1Sam. 12:3](#)].

This is quite a statement for a man to make who had been before the public eye for so many years, and who had been a judge. He had had many opportunities to become rich but had not yielded to the temptation. Samuel is one of the outstanding men of the Word of God -- yet he was a failure as a father. Many public men are like that. Many popular Christian leaders have had children who were failures. It is difficult to understand, but that is the way the human family has been moving down through the centuries and millenniums of the past.

Samuel said that if he had done any of the things he had mentioned to any of the people, he would restore it. It would have been easy for some men who had been miffed at one of Samuel's decisions to step out and say, "Well, you certainly were not fair with me." But nobody stepped out.

And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, He is witness [[1Sam. 12:5](#)].

Samuel's life could stand public inspection. It could be put under the hot spotlight of public opinion. He was truly a man of God.

Samuel continues by rehearsing Israel's history. Many men whom God made great used this method. Moses used it, Joshua used it, Gideon used it, and now Samuel uses it. In the New Testament we see that Stephen, when he appeared before the Sanhedrin, also rehearsed the history of Israel. Samuel is reminding his people of God's faithfulness and mercy to them. When their apostasy led to servitude and they cried to the Lord in their distress, He graciously heard and sent a deliverer. He is saying, as he did at Mizpeh, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us."

Then he moves to their present state and condition.

Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you [[1Sam. 12:13](#)].

Samuel makes it quite clear that Saul was the people's choice. Many people believe that the voice of the majority, the choice of the people, is the voice of God. The Bible contradicts this thinking. Generally the minority is closer to determining the will of God. The people wanted Saul. God was the One who chose David. What a difference when God makes the choice!

If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God [[1Sam. 12:14](#)].

Just because Saul is the people's choice, God will not reject him. God is going to give him an opportunity.

But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers [[1Sam. 12:15](#)].

Samuel is telling it like it is. If the people will serve God, He will bless them. If they do not serve Him, judgment will come.

Now God will respond to this in a dramatic and miraculous way.

Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes.

Is it not wheat harvest to-day? I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.

So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel [[1Sam. 12:16-18](#)].

Elijah was not the first man that could "preach up a storm" -- he brought in a thunderstorm, but Samuel did it before Elijah did. And this is God's seal, I think, upon Samuel's life. The thunder and rain were God's great "amen" on Samuel's career as God's spokesman.

And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king [[1Sam. 12:19](#)].

It was sin for these people to ask for a king. They were rejecting God by wanting a king to rule over them like the other nations.

And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart [[1Sam. 12:20](#)].

Friend, don't let past sins and mistakes spoil your life. Regardless of who you are or what you have done, if you will turn to the Lord for salvation and forgiveness, God will accept and richly bless you. Don't let the past destroy the future and ruin the present for you. Move out for God today, my Christian friend.

And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain [[1Sam. 12:21](#)].

Hold to the Lord alone. Let the gimmicks alone. Today the church is experimenting with methods. The church does not seem to realize that only God can bless. We need to hold on to the Lord and His Word. I don't think the Bible needs defending. It needs explaining; it needs to be proclaimed. We need the exclamation point and the declaration mark more than we need a question mark.

For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people [[1Sam. 12:22](#)].

This is a glorious verse. Have you taken the name of the Lord? Is He your Savior? Are you resting in Him? He will not forsake you. The Lord says through the writer of Hebrews, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" ([Heb. 13:5](#)). How wonderful is our God! It has pleased Him to make us His people.

Why did God choose the nation Israel? When you are looking for the answer, look to God and not to the people. God did it and that is enough. Perhaps God chose you, and some of your friends are wondering why. The important thing is that God chose us and that is enough. Thank God for that. He could have passed me by, but I rejoice in the fact that He did not. This is a tremendous message Samuel is giving the Israelites! Aren't you glad that you are on the Lord's side? Isn't it wonderful that you and the Lord are friends? Isn't it great that He is your Savior? He is for you and not against you. He wants to help you. He is a mighty Helper, friend, as well as a Savior. And He saves to the uttermost.

Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way [[1Sam. 12:23](#)].

I have found in my radio ministry that many people have a gift. It is a gift of prayer, and I believe it is from God. There are some people in Southern California on beds of sickness and pain -- some who will never leave their beds -- who have a ministry of prayer. I wouldn't take anything for their prayers. I need their prayers.

Now that I am retired I have more opportunity to move out across the country. I am enjoying my greatest ministry today, and it is largely because of the prayers of God's people. For example, in Chicago a man shook hands with me and said, "You know, I have been praying for you for years." When I hear something like this, I feel like weeping and getting down on my knees before Him. It is a privilege to pray for others.

Samuel said, "God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you." Each one of us has a prayer responsibility. I feel the necessity to pray for a certain group of ministers in this country, most of whom are my friends. I have been in their churches, and I know something about their problems. I pray for them regularly. I also have a responsibility to pray for my family. If I don't pray for them, who will? I have a responsibility to pray for my radio ministry. You too have a responsibility, Christian friend. We ought to pray for one another. There are many needy people. God forbid that we should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for one another.

Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you.

But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king [[1Sam. 12:24-25](#)].

The last time I went to a football game it was at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California. It was a long time ago. I sat next to a man who was rooting for the other team, and I want to tell you he was a nut. His team would make an inch on the field and he would jump to his feet. You would think he was having a conniption fit of some kind. My, how he carried on. He irritated me because I was rooting for the other side. But as I looked at him, I

could not help wishing that I had that kind of enthusiasm for the things of God. My friend, we need to serve Him with all of our hearts!

What a message there is for you and me in this swan song of Samuel the prophet.

Chapter 13

THEME: Saul rebels against God

The real nature of Saul begins to show. His son Jonathan got the victory at Michmash, but Saul blew the trumpet and took credit for it. In presumption, Saul intruded into the priest's office. Samuel rebuked and rejected Saul. The disarmament of Israel is revealed.

In this chapter I think I will be able to sustain the thesis that I presented in chapter 9 relative to King Saul. Saul's outward veneer made him look like a king, but underneath he was no king at all. He was nothing but a paper-doll king.

Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal [[1Sam. 13:1-4](#)].

The true character of Saul is beginning to emerge. When we get a good view of him, we are going to see that he is a phony. We read in these verses that Jonathan "smote the garrison of the Philistines." Who got credit for the victory? It was Saul. Jonathan appears to be a capable military leader. Later on we will find that he gains another great victory by using very interesting strategy. But in this particular battle Jonathan did the fighting, and Saul blew the trumpet. Saul took the credit for winning. Saul believed in the motto: "He who tooteth not his own horn, said horn will go untooted." Saul blew his own horn. He did not give his son credit for winning the battle. He called all of Israel together and gave a phony report. The army knew Saul's report was not true and so did the followers of Jonathan. Folk are beginning to suspect that there is a weakness in Saul's army and that it is his Achilles' heel. Is he humble? I said at the beginning that Saul had a case of false humility, and this fact is coming to light now.

And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits [[1Sam. 13:5-6](#)].

Apparently the Philistines recovered from their losses and came with force against the Israelites.

And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering [[1Sam. 13:8-9](#)].

Here is another revelation concerning Saul. He presumed that because of his position as king he could offer a burnt offering. Later on we will find that another king by the name of Uzziah also presumed he could perform a priestly duty. God judged him severely -- he became a leper ([2Chron. 26](#)). Saul ignored God's explicit instructions that only a priest from the tribe of Levi could offer a burnt offering.

And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash [[1Sam. 13:10-11](#)].

Saul was not willing to wait for Samuel. He was impatient and presumptuous. He thought he had three good reasons for not waiting for Samuel to appear: (1) The people were scattered; (2) the Philistines were coming against him; and (3) Samuel was a little late in arriving. Saul was rationalizing, of course. He was blaming everything and everyone else.

Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering [[1Sam. 13:12](#)].

Saul "forced" himself to offer an offering and make supplication unto the Lord. May I say that he was lying. He was being falsely pious. This is the real Saul emerging.

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee [[1Sam. 13:13-14](#)].

Saul was told in the beginning that if he obeyed God, he would be blessed, but if he disobeyed, there would be judgment. The ruler must obey the Lord. And what the world

needs today is a ruler who is being ruled by the Lord. Our problems stem from the fact that we don't have that kind of ruler. Of course we will not get one until the Lord Jesus comes back to earth; that is God's ultimate goal for this earth. Saul has disobeyed, so God has another man to be king. He is going to bring him on the scene a little later. Even Samuel, at this time, does not know who he is.

And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men.

And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual [[1Sam. 13:15-17](#)].

The battle is about to begin. We will see here the real danger of disarmament.

There are people today who are trying to disarm America. They think that if you destroy all of the ammunition somehow or other war will be eliminated. Others believe that if a gun law is passed and honest people are disarmed, this will stop the crooks. You cannot disarm the crooks, friend. All you do is lay honest people open to violation by the unlawful ones. This is idealistic, foolish thinking.

Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears:

But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.

Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads [[1Sam. 13:19-21](#)].

The Philistines had disarmed the Israelites. The Israelites were permitted, however, some farm implements. But in order to sharpen them, they had to go down to the Philistines. In this way the enemy was able to keep an accurate count of what the Israelites had in the way of weapons.

So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash [[1Sam. 13:22-23](#)].

Only two men, Saul and Jonathan, had swords. I suppose the other men in the army carried mattocks, axes, clubs, and similar instruments. This was the way Saul's army was equipped to fight!

Chapter 14

THEME: Jonathan's victory over the Philistines; Saul's hasty order is overridden

Jonathan's Victory Over The Philistines (14:18-23)

Once again Jonathan gains a great victory, but Saul takes the credit for it and reveals his jealousy. He actually would have destroyed his own son!

Chapter 14 gives us the strategy of battle that Jonathan used against the Philistines. It is said that this is the chapter which the British General Allenby read the night before he made his successful attack upon the Turks in World War I. To me this is an interesting sidelight. I am unable to give you the details of the strategy of this battle since I am not well acquainted with the geography of the region -- on a trip to Palestine I wanted to go there, but our time was limited -- neither am I a military man. I am sure that when General Allenby read this chapter, it was a thrilling revelation to him to see how Jonathan executed his military tactics. General Allenby was a Christian who knew his Bible.

Apparently Jonathan's strategy was to take his men through a narrow pass. Here, with the few weapons they had to fight with, Jonathan's army had a distinct advantage. A similar battle took place at Thermopylae, a mountain pass in eastern Greece, where the Greeks, although greatly outnumbered, were able to hold off the Persian army. In Israel's case, this strategy certainly worked to their advantage since Israel was hopelessly outnumbered and almost unarmed.

We will pass over the details of this battle and look instead at the great spiritual lesson that is here.

And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel [[1Sam. 14:18](#)].

Saul should not have taken the ark to the battlefield. As we have seen before in the days of Samuel, the children of Israel used the ark in a superstitious manner, thinking it would help them win their battles. Apparently Saul has the same reason.

So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven [[1Sam. 14:23](#)].

In spite of Saul's action in bringing out the ark, Jonathan's strategy won the battle on the human side. God is with this young man -- it is too bad that he did not live long. God saved Israel that day.

Saul's Hasty Order Is Overridden (14:24-45)

And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food.

And all they of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground.

And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.

But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened [[1Sam. 14:24-27](#)].

It is interesting to note that Jonathan did not know about his father's strange order that no man was to eat until the battle was won. Actually Jonathan had already won the battle. Now we are beginning to see the real nature of Saul. Jonathan gained the victory, and Saul takes credit for it. He is not willing to give the credit to his son. His "modesty" is gone, and his jealousy is revealed.

Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day. And the people were faint.

Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines? [[1Sam. 14:28-30](#)].

It was a foolish command that Saul had given. The men were weary. They had fought a battle and won. They needed something to eat. Saul said, "I will not let anyone eat anything until I am avenged of my enemies." His modesty was absolutely gone.

And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD [[1Sam. 14:35](#)].

He actually built an altar to the Lord and offered sacrifices!

And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God.

And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day [[1Sam. 14:36-37](#)].

God is not using this man at all.

And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.

For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him [[1Sam. 14:38-39](#)].

Saul, you see, is not willing to take the blame himself. He says that someone else has sinned. The army stood silently. They knew the victory was Jonathan's. And now Saul was saying, "The reason God did not answer me was because someone did not obey me and broke the oath." The army knew that Jonathan had tasted the honey, and they knew that Saul was putting up a tremendous front at this time. They stood in silence because he was the king.

Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee [[1Sam. 14:40](#)].

The army is not saying much.

Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped [[1Sam. 14:41](#)].

Saul believed Jonathan was guilty.

And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken.

Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in mine hand, and, lo, I must die [[1Sam. 14:42-43](#)].

Jonathan was guilty -- guilty of doing what Saul had not wanted him to do. Saul had said, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food this day." But was this something to die for?

And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.

And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not [[1Sam. 14:44-45](#)].

Saul would actually destroy his own son if he stood in his way. Why? Because Saul is jealous of Jonathan. He wants all of the glory for himself. The army had remained silent through all of Saul's rantings and ravings, but when Jonathan's life was at stake, they no longer kept quiet.

We are now seeing the true character of Saul. Later on we will see how he will act in direct disobedience to God. He is going to do something that will bring tragedy to the nation Israel. Had not God intervened, it would have meant the extermination of the nation. Saul is revealing that he is not God's man at all. He is actually Satan's man. We will see in the next chapter that Saul is not obeying God any longer -- he is following his own devices. Finally the Spirit of God will no longer speak to him. God will no longer give him leading, and he will turn from God to the demonic world. Then we will study that remarkable incident when Saul actually consults the witch of En-dor. It is a section with a great lesson for us in these days in which we are seeing the manifestation of

demonism, the occult, the worship of Satan, and astrology. God help America today because there are many Sauls abroad!

Chapter 15

THEME: Saul's rebellion concerning Agag; Samuel rebukes Saul

Saul's Rebellion Concerning Agag (15:1-11)

Saul's rebellion against the command of God is revealed in this chapter. Also we see his facade in wanting Samuel's help in covering up his sin before the people. Saul is rejected now as king, with no hope of recovery. We see Samuel's love for Saul as he mourns for him.

Why the extreme surgery in slaying the Amalekites and Agag? The answer is found in the Book of Esther. Haman, who almost succeeded in destroying the entire Jewish race, was an Amalekite. God knew the true character of this people, which was first revealed in their unprovoked and malicious attack upon Israel in the wilderness ([Exod. 17:8-16](#)).

As we continue our study in the life of Saul, we find that he is indeed Satan's man. I trust we have not done him an injustice by identifying him as such. Personally I do not believe that he was ever saved, and I believe there was something of the hypocrite in the man -- he pretended to be God's man, but he never was. Also he tried to cover up his rebellion and disobedience regarding Agag.

Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt.

Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, and camel and ass [[1Sam. 15:1-3](#)].

These instructions may seem extreme to you if you are not familiar with the history of Amalek. Moses, who was there when it happened, rehearsed the episode for the younger generation in [Deuteronomy 25:17-19](#): "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it."

If these people had been permitted to live, they would probably have caused more trouble in the future than is imaginable. Apparently Saul spared some of these people, and when we come to the Book of Esther, we will get acquainted with one of them, Haman. He tried to exterminate the Hebrew nation and would have succeeded had not God

intervened. When we get God's perspective we understand His immediate action. Very candidly, since you and I are not God and are not obligated to make God's decisions, we cannot pass judgment upon Him.

And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.

And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from the Amalekites [[1Sam. 15:4-6](#)].

We find here that Saul gathered the people together and numbered them. Then he came to a city of Amalek and warned the Kenites to leave the Amalekites before they were destroyed. The Kenites, you recall, were descendants of Moses' father-in-law. We saw references to them in [Judges 1:16](#) and [Judges 4:11-17](#). This was an act of mercy that no pagan nation would have practiced in that day.

And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt [[1Sam. 15:7](#)].

Now up to this point Saul is being obedient.

And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword.

But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly [[1Sam. 15:8-9](#)].

He thought, what a shame to destroy everything! So he saved Agag, who was the ruler of the Amalekites. Saul had no right to spare him any more than he had the right to spare the humblest peasant among these people. This nation was wholly given to evil, and the king, above all others, should have been destroyed and judged at this time. Neither had Saul the right to save from destruction the best of the cattle. It would appear that he made his attack for the purpose of obtaining booty and spoil, and God had forbidden that. The Israelites were bringing judgment upon the Amalekites for almighty God in this particular case.

Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying,

It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night [[1Sam. 15:10-11](#)].

Not only did the people choose Saul, Samuel chose him also. Samuel loved Saul. He wanted him to make good as king. I think he wanted Saul, even more than David, to be

successful. Now, however, God has rejected Saul, and Samuel, who is obedient to God, must execute God's orders. Saul has not been obedient and judgment is coming.

Samuel Rebukes Saul (15:12-35)

And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.

And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD [[1Sam. 15:12-13](#)].

Saul says that he had been obedient, but notice Samuel's retort to this.

And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?

And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed [[1Sam. 15:14-15](#)].

Listen to Saul as he begins to use double-talk and subterfuge in an attempt to camouflage his conduct. He had a very pious reason for sparing some of the animals. He wanted to have excellent animals to sacrifice to the Lord! This was, of course, an attempt to cover up his disobedience with pious pretense.

You can find that same kind of hypocrisy in our contemporary culture. I become rather amused when it is reported that the liquor interests donate money for beautiful gardens and scenic spots for people to visit and enjoy. They always like to make it known -- and the media is apparently delighted to report -- how much the liquor interests pay in taxes each year. Of course, anyone knows that the alcoholics are costing our government more than any taxes the liquor interests pay. There is the tendency to cover our evil businesses with good works. Many of God's people try to turn their disobedience into some pious project. I am not sure but what we are all guilty of that sort of thing.

When I came out of seminary and entered the ministry, I drove an old, beat-up jalopy, an old Chevrolet. As a young preacher I was satisfied with it. I was not married, and I enjoyed driving it around, although my congregation was embarrassed by it. In fact, they felt it was sort of a joke. Then I met a young lady, and I began to pray that the Lord would give me a new car. I told Him I needed a new car so that I could be more efficient in my visitation. To be honest, "more efficient visitation" did not enter into it at all. I wanted a nice car to impress this young lady! It is so easy for human beings, believers and nonbelievers, to rationalize.

When Saul's disobedience was discovered, you will notice, he tried to blame the people for what happened. He said, "The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen." However, the record states that it was "Saul and the people." He was the king and the one who was responsible.

And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.

But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal [[1Sam. 15:20-21](#)].

Saul says that he obeyed the voice of the Lord. Notice he does not say, "My God," or "our God," but "thy God." He does not take any responsibility at all for sparing the animals, yet he is the one to blame.

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king [[1Sam. 15:22-23](#)].

This is one of those remarkable passages of Scripture. This is God's rejection of Saul as king on the basis of his rebellion and disobedience to God. This is an important message for all of us who claim to be children of God.

There is a great deal of this informal and friendly approach to the Lord Jesus Christ today. There are so many little songs that go something like this: "Jesus is a friend of mine." We need to be careful how we use an approach like this to Him. When you say that Jesus is a friend of yours, what do you mean? Actually, you are trying to bring Him down to your level. If I would say that the president of the United States is a friend of mine, I would be bringing him down to my level. But suppose that the president announced that Vernon McGee is his friend. That would bring me up to his level. When we begin to talk about Jesus as "a friend of mine," we are not being Scriptural. The Lord said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" ([John 15:14](#)). Are you obedient unto Him? How dare any of us call Him friend if we are not obeying Him? To disobey Him is worse than witchcraft. It is rebellion against God. When you meet a person who is totally disobedient to the Lord, you almost have to conclude that he does not belong to the Lord at all. Now I am not saying that works enter into salvation. I am saying that if you are a child of God, if you come to the place where you know Him, you will obey Him. He also said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" ([John 14:15](#)). I am of the opinion that if you would say to the Lord, "I don't love you," He would say, "Forget about My commandments." The important thing is to be rightly related to the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a child of God is to know Him personally. That is what makes Christianity different from any religion in the world. You can be a Buddhist without knowing Buddha. You can be a follower of Confucius without knowing him. You can be a member of any other religion without knowing the founder, but you cannot be a Christian, friend, without knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. And to know Him is life eternal.

And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice [[1Sam. 15:24](#)].

Notice the low motivation of this man. He said he was afraid of the people and so he obeyed their wishes. He wanted to please everyone. Many folks are like Saul. Lots of preachers try to please everybody. I heard about a prominent minister lately who has begun to compromise, and he says he is doing it because he wants to get along with everyone. That was Saul's approach. It is true that he confesses that he has transgressed, but his penitence is not genuine.

Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.

And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.

And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent.

And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou.

And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent [[1Sam. 15:25-29](#)].

God made Saul king, and now He is taking the kingdom away from him because of his sin. It looks as if God has changed His mind when in reality He has not at all. It is not God who has changed, but Saul. Saul has sinned and so God must deal with him accordingly.

Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God [[1Sam. 15:30](#)].

I do not believe Saul's repentance is genuine. Look how he is covering up his sin. He says to Samuel, "Let us go through the forms of worship together and not let the people know that I have been rejected." He wanted to repent, but not have to pay the penalty for his disobedience. He was a hypocrite right to the end.

Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.

And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal [[1Sam. 15:32-33](#)].

Agag came "delicately" unto Samuel because he knew he was in trouble. And Samuel killed Agag. Now that may be strong medicine for some folk today, but my friend, our God is a God of judgment and He is going to judge wrong and evil. I am glad that God is going to judge. I don't know about you, but I thank God that no one is getting away with

evil today. There may be those, even in high places, who think they are getting away with their sin, and dishonesty, and murder, and adultery, but they are not. God is going to judge them. No one is going to get away with sin, and we need to make that very clear today. So Samuel executed the judgment of God upon this vile, wicked ruler, Agag.

Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul.

And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel [[1Sam. 15:34-35](#)].

When the Bible says that God repented, it means that His actions look as though He changed His mind. He has not. God said all along that if Saul did not make good, He would remove him. Saul sinned, and so God removed him from his position as king. God still hates sin and will judge it. Saul was the choice of the people, and he failed. Yet Samuel mourned for him. I think Samuel loved Saul a great deal more than he loved David. He hated to see this man fail and turn aside. That is why his words to Saul were so strong and harsh; they came from a person who loved him. The words of Samuel were also coming from the heart of God.

My friend, God's love will not deter Him from judging sinners. He can love them and still execute judgment. Our God is holy and righteous and just, as well as loving.

Chapter 16

THEME: David anointed

God chooses David as king to succeed Saul and sends Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint him as king. Because Saul is forsaken of God, David is brought into court to play upon his harp to soothe the evil spirit of Saul.

Chapter 16 brings us to a new subject. We will see David in contrast to Saul. David is God's man, and Saul is Satan's man. In chapter 15 we saw God's rejection of Saul. God gave Saul not just one opportunity but several opportunities to see if he would obey Him. Saul revealed that he was totally disobedient unto God. He should have made good, but he did not. The Lord did not need to wait to see the results of Saul's kingship. He already knew. But Saul needed to know. Samuel needed to know because he loved Saul. The people needed to know because they had chosen Saul.

Today you and I need to know if we are genuine children of God. For this reason we will be tested. We need the help of the Spirit of God because we are told in [Hebrews 12:6](#), "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." The Lord tests those whom He loves. This was God's method in Saul's day, and it is His method today. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him" ([James 1:12](#)).

Again, why extreme surgery in slaying the Amalekites and Agag? Amalek was a son of Esau. The Amalekites fought the children of Israel when they were trying to get into the

Promised Land. God said He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation and would finally judge them. The Amalekites had five hundred years to change their ways. Because they had definitely turned their backs upon God, He judged them.

Now we come to the place where God chooses David to succeed Saul as king. God is sending Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint David king. David was God's choice. Although God had trouble with him, God has trouble with all of us, doesn't He?

And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons [[1Sam. 16:1](#)].

Believe me, Saul had Samuel on his side. Samuel loved him and hated to see God set him aside. It hurt Samuel to give Saul the ultimatum that he had been rejected and dismissed as king. Samuel's sorrow makes it all the more impressive.

And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee [[1Sam. 16:2-3](#)].

Samuel is afraid to go to Jesse because Saul is in no mood for opposition. He is desperate. As we move into this story, however, we find that it is God who makes the choice. He tells Samuel exactly what to do, but He does not give him any advance information. His lack of knowledge will protect him. So Samuel goes to Bethlehem and to the house of Jesse. He asks Jesse and his sons to come for a sacrifice.

And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart [[1Sam. 16:6-7](#)].

All through this section we are given excellent spiritual principles. In chapter 15 Samuel said to Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" ([1Sam. 15:22](#)). You and I demonstrate whether or not we are children of the Lord Jesus Christ by our love for Him. It is not what we say in a testimony; it is whether or not we are obeying Him. The Christian life is one of reality. It is not a life of "put-on" and pretense.

When God looks at us, friend, He looks at us from the inside. He is an interior decorator. He always checks the interior. Samuel looks at this well-built, handsome young man and feels this must be God's choice for the next king of Israel. But God says to Samuel, "I don't want you to look at his outward appearance. Don't judge a man by his looks. Let me select the man this time. I will choose the king." God sees the heart, and thank God for that. We are so apt to judge folk, even in Christian circles, by their looks, by their

pocketbook, by their status symbol -- the Cadillac they drive, by the home they live in, or by the position they occupy. God never judges anyone on that basis. He is telling Samuel not to pay any attention to the outward appearance. God is going to look at the heart.

So Jesse had his sons pass before Samuel one by one. Samuel made it clear to Jesse why he had come, and Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel.

Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither [[1Sam. 16:10-11](#)].

Surely even the father of David would never have chosen him above the other seven brothers. To begin with, David was only a boy. It is believed that he was about sixteen years old -- possibly younger. He was a shepherd. He was out with the sheep. He didn't really know very much. Jesse certainly would not have chosen him above his brethren to be a king. In fact, he had ignored him entirely. He was so sure one of his other sons would be selected that he did not even invite David to the sacrifice. When Samuel found out that David was tending sheep, he said in substance, "This is important business, and I'm not about to sit down and eat until I have accomplished my mission."

And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he [[1Sam. 16:12](#)].

When this verse says that David was "ruddy," it means that he had red hair -- and he had a temper to match his red hair, a hot temper. But in addition to the fact that he was red-headed, he was a fine-looking fellow. He had a "beautiful countenance." God does not despise that which is beautiful. God can use beauty. He is the Creator of beauty. No one who lives on this earth can ignore the beauty in the many scenic spots in every state and country. And a sunset in any place is a thing of glory. God majors in beauty.

I resent the fact that the non-Christian world gets everything that is worthwhile and beautiful. Why is not beauty and talent dedicated to God today?

Well, David was a handsome young man, but God did not choose him for that reason. God knew his heart. He was God's choice. God knows what you and I do not know about him. Although David failed, down underneath was a faith that never failed. David loved and trusted God. He wanted to walk with Him. God took him to the woodshed and punished him within an inch of his life, and David never whimpered or cried aloud. He wanted that fellowship with God, and God loved him. He was a man after God's own heart.

Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah [[1Sam. 16:13](#)].

Samuel anointed David king, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. At this time the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.

But the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well [[1Sam. 16:14-16](#)].

I believe Saul was completely taken over by Satan. His servants noted that he had this mental malady, this spiritual sickness. It is said that music has power to tame the savage beast. Saul's servants suggested a contest to find who was the best musician. David was a musician.

And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me.

Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.

Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep.

And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.

And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer.

And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him [[1Sam. 16:17-23](#)].

David was an unusual person in many ways. David is brought into the palace. God looks at the inner man when He chooses someone for a particular office or task. Saul is now forsaken of God, and David is brought into court to play upon his harp. Although it is not yet known, Israel has a new king.

CHAPTERS 17 AND 18

Chapter 17

THEME: God trains David

Chapter 17 is one of the most familiar in the Bible. This wonderful episode of David and Goliath reveals more than human bravery. It reveals that, even as a boy, David had a heart for God. He didn't volunteer to fight the giant because his people were being shamed, but because Goliath was defying the armies of the living God! As he faced his formidable foe, he testified to his faith in God: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" ([1Sam. 17:45](#)).

David Slays Goliath, Giant Of Gath (17:1-47)

Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which belongeth to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim.

And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines [[1Sam. 17:1-2](#)].

Israel is at war again with the Philistines, their perennial and perpetual enemy.

And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them [[1Sam. 17:3](#)].

These two armies were at a standstill. They were poised to enter the battle and did not want to fight. It was similar to Israel's present conflict. At the Suez Canal Israel is on one side and Egypt is on the other. Well, here are the Philistines on one mountain; Israel is on the other mountain, with a valley between. The Philistines are the aggressors.

And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass [[1Sam. 17:4-5](#)].

If a cubit is eighteen inches, Goliath was a pretty tall man. Since one span is about nine inches, Goliath was about nine feet, nine inches tall. He was a big boy. He could have played center or forward on any basketball team. Certainly these soldiers wanted to put the decision of the battle in the hands of Goliath and one Israelite.

And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.

And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me [[1Sam. 17:7-8](#)].

Every day Goliath challenged the Israelites to send out a man to fight him, but after forty days, no one had accepted. David came on the scene because he had brought food to his brothers who were serving in the army. David was alarmed that no one would accept the

challenge. His brothers tried to send him home, but David would not go. When Saul heard that David would go against Goliath, he tried to put his armor on him. David, however, was just a boy. He said, "I can't fight with these because I haven't tested them. I will just have to fight with the equipment I'm used to." What a lesson there is for us in this. Let's not try to be something we are not, or try to do something we are really not called to do. If God has called you to use a slingshot, friend, don't try to use a sword. If God has called you to speak, then speak. If God has called you to do something else, well, do that. If God has called you to sing, sing. But if He has not called you to sing, for goodness sake, don't do it. Too many people are trying to use a sword when the slingshot is really more their size.

And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine [[1Sam. 17:40](#)].

Some people believe that David chose five smooth stones so that if he missed his first shot, he could use one or all of the others. David did not intend to miss, friend. Then why did he select five stones? The answer is found in [2Samuel 21:22](#): "These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants." Goliath had four sons, and David was sure they would come out when he killed their father. This is why David picked up five stones. That was the number he needed.

Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands [[1Sam. 17:45-47](#)].

You know the rest of the story. It is so familiar. God gave David the victory, and he killed Goliath. The battle was the Lord's, and the giant was delivered into David's hands.

There are many great spiritual lessons in this chapter. For example, the giant represents the world; Saul, I think, represents Satan; and David represents the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are admonished, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" ([1John 2:15](#)). We are in the world but not of it. What a difference there is between David and Samson. Samson treated the Philistines as friends -- he even married one of them. David treated Goliath as an enemy. The world system, the Kosmos -- which includes all governments, educational programs, and entertainments -- is the enemy of the believer today. The interesting thing is that David's faith enabled him to go out to meet the giant and defeat him. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that

overcometh the world, even our faith" ([1John 5:4](#)). It is the same lesson Joshua learned at Jericho: he found out that the battle is the Lord's. David also learned that he could not use the weapons of this world to fight the battle. He had to use his own weapons, his own methods -- those in which God had schooled him. The believer today needs to recognize that the world can be overcome only by his faith and confidence in God.

Chapter 18

Jonathan And David Make A Covenant (18:1-16)

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul [[1Sam. 18:1](#)].

David was speaking to Saul. Saul had called David after the battle because he wanted to give him recognition for his deed. (I think Saul felt that he gave him too much recognition in light of what happened later.) As Jonathan, Saul's son, stood there listening as David and his father talked, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." The relationship of these two men was quite wonderful. We often speak about the love of a man for a woman -- and that is wonderful -- but nothing is as fine and noble as the love of two men for each other. They see in each other a mirror of themselves and are drawn together. Two men can be real friends. They can enjoy athletics and recreation together. They can work together and have a social life together. Jonathan was an outstanding man, as we have seen, and he loved David for his courage and his confidence in God.

And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house [[1Sam. 18:2](#)].

David now becomes a public figure, and he will occupy that position for the rest of his life.

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul [[1Sam. 18:3](#)].

The covenant that these two men made was that they would stick together. It is difficult to find another friendship equal to what these men had. There is nothing quite like it.

And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle [[1Sam. 18:4](#)].

David was a peasant boy, and he did not have the clothes befitting his new public life. Jonathan shared his wardrobe with David. It was a very generous thing to do.

And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants [[1Sam. 18:5](#)].

David had that charisma that we hear so much about, which made him accepted by the public. David was actually a great man. God looked on his heart, the people are looking at the outside, and David looked good both on the inside and on the outside. Of course

David was not sinless, as we shall see, but he had a real heart for God, and people loved him for it.

And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music.

And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?

And Saul eyed David from that day and forward [[1Sam. 18:6-9](#)].

Saul did not like the new song that the women were singing. Saul became jealous of David because of the people's applause and acceptance of him. As the story progresses, Saul will attempt to remove him from the limelight by actually destroying him. As David becomes the favorite of the people, he begins to see that Saul is not as friendly as he once was.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand [[1Sam. 18:10](#)].

This is quite a dramatic scene. As David is playing on a harp, and Saul is sitting over there playing with a javelin, David may have guessed what he had in mind. He may have hit a sour note or two, I don't know, but suddenly Saul threw the javelin.

And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice [[1Sam. 18:11](#)].

Saul wanted to get rid of David permanently. David dodged the javelin and then departed. He took French leave -- got out of the palace and the area as quickly as he could.

Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them [[1Sam. 18:15-16](#)].

David Marries Michal, Saul's Daughter (18:20)

David is now the one who is being accepted by the nation. Saul has been wondering how he can trap him and finally decides upon a clever method. He promises David his daughter Merab for his wife on the condition that he continue to war with the Philistines, hoping he will be killed in battle. Then he fails to keep faith with David and gives Merab to another. Now we will see that he wants to give his younger daughter to David. Why? That would put David in the family where Saul could get to him any time he wanted to. I

do not believe David ever loved Michal. We blame David for having several marriages, but he certainly got off to a bad start with this girl.

And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him [[1Sam. 18:20](#)].

It says here that Michal loved David, but it was not that marital love that is needed to make a success of marriage. In the beginning it was that love of the hero and his popularity. The day will come when she will ridicule him and despise him for his enthusiasm for God.

CHAPTERS 19 AND 20

Chapter 19

THEME: Saul attempts to kill David again; Jonathan helps David escape

This chapter begins a section which I have labeled "David Disciplined." Saul personally attempts to kill David, then he openly gives orders that David be slain. Although several times King Saul briefly repents of his murderous intent, David's life is in jeopardy until Saul's death. During these days of exile -- possibly a period of ten years -- David is hunted like a wild animal. He is a nomad, a vagabond. Living in caves in the wilderness, he endures many hardships and privations. However, he is being tested and trained in God's school. He takes the full course and graduates magna cum laude. He becomes Israel's greatest king -- in fact, the world's greatest king -- and a man after God's own heart. Many of the wonderful Psalms of David are written during this rough and rugged period.

Saul Attempts To Kill David Again (19:1-18)

And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself [[1Sam. 19:1-2](#)].

Jonathan told David to get out of the palace, because his life was in danger there, and hide himself. Saul was now openly trying to take David's life. His friend, Jonathan, wants to help him.

And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good [[1Sam. 19:3-4](#)].

Jonathan has a plan. He is going to try to talk to his father. Saul and Jonathan go out into the field and Jonathan says, "David has actually helped you. He is one of your followers. He is a wonderful citizen of your kingdom. You should not try to kill him."

For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.

And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past [[1Sam. 19:5-7](#)].

Saul listened to his son, and David came back to the palace. David was wary, however, because he knew his life was in danger.

And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him [[1Sam. 19:8](#)].

Notice Saul's reaction to David's success.

And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand.

And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night [[1Sam. 19:9-10](#)].

An evil spirit comes upon Saul again, and he wants to kill David. It is a very dramatic scene. David is playing his harp, and Saul is fingering his javelin. David senses his murderous mood. Saul throws that javelin with the intent of pinning him to the wall. David knows that he is no longer safe in the palace even though he is married to Saul's daughter.

Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain.

So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.

And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth [[1Sam. 19:11-13](#)].

Here in the beginning Michal was on David's side. She told David that if he did not escape that very night he would be slain the next day. She knew her father meant

business. So David fled from the palace, and Michal fixed up the bed to make it look like he was still in it.

And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick.

And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.

And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster.

And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee? [[1Sam. 19:14-17](#)].

When Saul found out that he had been deceived, he demanded an explanation from his daughter. She placated him by saying that David would have killed her if she had failed to help him.

So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth [[1Sam. 19:18](#)].

Because Samuel had anointed David as king, his life, too, is in danger. Saul is now openly attempting to slay David. From now on David will live like a hunted animal. What will the future hold for David at this particular time? He will be on the run until the death of Saul.

Chapter 20

Jonathan Helps David Escape (20:1-42)

Saul knew his daughter Michal had deceived him concerning David. He knew Jonathan and David were good friends. Therefore Jonathan had to be wary, careful, and very secretive about communicating with David. That is why he used the method of shooting arrows.

And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life? [[1Sam. 20:1](#)].

David asked the question, "What have I done?" He had never hurt Saul. In fact, he had actually helped him. But Saul was never a king. God knew he was not a king, and he was not God's choice. The people had wanted a king and they wanted Saul to be that king. God granted their request but, as it was during the time of Moses, He sent leanness to their souls. In the wilderness the children of Israel wanted meat, and He fattened them up with quail. He gave them what they wanted, but it was evident that they were not trusting God. If they had trusted the Lord, they would have been satisfied with manna and would not have cried out for meat, and they would have found joy and peace in their lives.

Many Christians today are way ahead of the Lord, begging Him for this, that, and the other thing. They are not willing to rest quietly and let God work things out in their lives. Many times when He grants our requests, we say, "Isn't it wonderful that He answered

my prayer?" Not always. Sometimes we beg Him for something and, after He gives it to us, we realize it is the worst thing that could have happened to us. A wealthy man in Florida told me how he lost his son. He said, "The biggest mistake I ever made was to give him everything he wanted." Sometimes when we keep after God, He sends us what we are begging for, but the result is leanness to our souls. That was true of the children of Israel who wanted Saul as their king. He certainly is causing a problem for the nation.

David is puzzled. He cannot understand why Saul is after him.

And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so [[1Sam. 20:2](#)].

Jonathan tells David that if his father makes a move to slay him, he will know about it.

And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death [[1Sam. 20:3](#)].

What a statement! -- "there is but a step between me and death." It was not only that way in David's day, it is also that way today. Whether we drive the freeways of the city or the highways of the country, you and I are within a step of death. Isaiah said that there is only a heartbeat between you and death. Death can come at any time. That is the reason we ought to be ready at any moment to move out into eternity and into the presence of God. How many folk have made every arrangement for this life but none for the next life! Are you a saved individual -- that is, are you trusting Christ as Savior -- so that if you should die at this moment you would go into the presence of God? Let me caution you not to put off accepting Christ as your Lord and Savior any longer.

Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee [[1Sam. 20:4](#)].

Jonathan was a real friend to David. It is wonderful to have a friend like that. [Proverbs 18:24](#) says, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." A brother may sometime let you down, but a real friend never will. A friend, we are told, is one who is born for adversity. A man proves he is your friend when you are in trouble. When David was in trouble, Jonathan proved to be his friend. He would do anything to protect David.

And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to-morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even [[1Sam. 20:5](#)].

David was expected to be at the palace at mealtime, but he was afraid to go. Instead he is asking Jonathan's permission to disappear for three days.

If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him [[1Sam. 20:6-7](#)].

This was the way that David was going to find out the true feelings of Saul.

And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?

Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly?

And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to-morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee;

The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not:

But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies.

And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul [[1Sam. 20:9-17](#)].

Jonathan realized that David, his brother-in-law, would probably succeed Saul upon the throne. So he requested that when David came into power his own relationship with David's house might not be forgotten.

Plans were made so that these two friends could communicate. Jonathan would be watched to see if they made contact, so they had to be extremely careful. The plan called for Jonathan to shoot with his bow and arrows. No suspicion would be aroused if he went out often for archery because he was a warrior. David would be hiding in the field. Jonathan would go into the field with his armor-bearer and shoot an arrow. If he shot the arrow way beyond David, it meant that evil was determined against him and he should flee. If he shot the arrow closer to David, in front of him instead of beyond him, he would know it was safe to return.

On the third day Jonathan went out into the field with his bow. There would be no way for Saul to know that his son was about to deliver a message to David. The word about Saul was not favorable. Saul had made it very clear that he wanted to slay David. The arrow went flying through the air and landed way on the other side of him. That meant he was to flee. Jonathan instructed his armor-bearer to pick up the arrows he had shot and then take his artillery into the city. When the boy is gone, David and Jonathan meet and talk.

And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city [[1Sam. 20:42](#)].

David is in danger from here on. He is going to flee, but the interesting thing is the covenant that David and Jonathan make. We will find that Jonathan kept his part of the covenant. He was faithful and true to David to the very end of his life. David was also faithful and true to Jonathan and his descendants.

Later on, both Saul and Jonathan are slain by the Philistines, and David comes to the throne. The safe thing for him to have done would have been to exterminate every member of the house of Saul. That means that if Jonathan had a son he should have been killed. The fact of the matter is that Jonathan did have a son. We are going to meet him a little later on in the story. His name was Mephibosheth, and he was crippled. When Saul and Jonathan were slain, a servant took the boy and hid him. But David is going to make good his covenant. David found the boy, took him to the palace, put him at his table, fed him, and cared for him. Why? He is making good his covenant with Jonathan because his friend showed him grace.

I will have occasion later on to go into more detail concerning this subject, but right now let me call your attention to the wonderful meaning of this story. David showed kindness to Mephibosheth for the sake of Jonathan. God has shown kindness to you and me for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not because of who we are or what we have done that He saved us. Our salvation comes because of who Christ is and what He has done for us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)). Because His Son died for us, God extends favor to us for Jesus' sake.

After David and Jonathan talked, Jonathan returned to the palace. I think he was a very sad man because he knew that his father was determined to slay his beloved friend.

CHAPTERS 21 AND 22

Chapter 21

THEME: David involves the priests; David gathers his mighty men; Saul slays the priests of God

David Involves The Priests (21:1-15)

Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee? [[1Sam. 21:1](#)].

David is very much alone as he flees from Saul. His young men are with him, of course, so he is not alone in that respect. He is alone in that no one in his party is wearing the livery of King Saul.

And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place.

Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women [[1Sam. 21:2-4](#)].

The thought in this portion of Scripture is simply that the only bread available was on the table of showbread, which was not to be eaten except by the priest and only at a certain time -- which was at the changing of the bread each Sabbath day.

And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away [[1Sam. 21:5-6](#)].

Although Israel had a God-given religion, and this bread was dedicated for religious purposes, there were some hungry men present who needed food. That bread would have become commonplace if it could not have been used to feed hungry mouths. That is what David was saying.

In giving David and his men the bread, the priest was breaking the letter of the Law but not the spirit of the Law. You will recall that the Pharisees challenged the Lord Jesus Christ about breaking the Law (which He did not do). The Lord refuted their accusations by referring to this incident in the life of David. [Mark 2:23-28](#) tells us, "And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."

What the Lord was saying in His day was, "If David could do it, and it was all right, there is One here greater than David, and He can do it also." David ate the showbread because he had need. Christ is saying that human need supersedes all ritual and ceremonial laws.

Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day,
detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite,
the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul [[1Sam. 21:7](#)].

There is a "Judas Iscariot" in the crowd that day at the tabernacle. His name is Doeg, and he is an Edomite. He is in Saul's service, and he is going to betray David and the high priest. David has a great deal to say about this man in [Psalm 52](#).

And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine
hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my
weapons with me, because the king's business required haste
[[1Sam. 21:8](#)].

Now I would like to call your attention to the way that last clause is misquoted. I have heard it said that certain things should be done for the Lord and done quickly because "the King's business requires haste." To begin with, let's understand what David is actually saying. He does not have a sword or a spear because he had to leave in a hurry. Also David is not on a mission for his king -- he is misrepresenting here.

I am here to say that the King's business does not require haste. Have you ever noticed how patiently God works? He is going to work that way in the life of David. David is going to be schooled and trained in the caves of the earth. That is God's method. God is in no hurry. Moses was in a hurry, and he wanted to deliver the children of Israel forty years before God was ready. Moses was not ready either. God put him out in the desert and trained him and schooled him for forty years until he was ready. God brought His Son into the world thirty-three years before He went to the Cross! The thing that marks the work of God is not haste but the fact that He works slowly and patiently. Oh my, how impatient we become! I am sure my wife would say, "Yes, and you are not the one to talk to people about patience because you are a very impatient man." That is true, I am impatient. I am trying, now that I am retired, to learn the art of waiting before the Lord. That is something we all need to learn. David needed to learn it too. God has had to train His men like that. God has had to teach patience to every man He has ever used. God moves and works slowly. If you want to see the way He moves, look how long it takes Him to make a diamond or a redwood tree. God's work does not require haste, friends. That is not God's method.

David is saying something in this chapter that is not true, as the context reveals. David was not on a mission for the king, and "the king's business requires haste" is in no way applicable to Christian work.

And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou
slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth
behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no
other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give
it me [[1Sam. 21:9](#)].

It is interesting that David could use the slingshot when he was a youngster, but he has been in the king's palace a long time. Perhaps he has lost his cunning with the slingshot. Now he needs a sword and he uses Goliath's sword because it is available.

And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath [[1Sam. 21:10](#)].

David got as far away from Saul as he possibly could and went to Achish. When he arrived among these foreigners, he found he was in danger. They were enemies of Israel; so David had to pretend that he was a madman. He had to put on an act. Shakespeare's Hamlet had to do the same thing to keep from being slain.

Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house? [[1Sam. 21:15](#)].

David's act was good and the king of Achish believed it. David would not be in danger there.

Chapter 22

David Gathers His Mighty Men (22:1-4)

Chapter 22 begins that period in David's life when he hides in the caves and dens of the earth. He is learning that the King's business does not require haste. God is schooling and training him as He has His other men. During these years when he hides from the presence of Saul who seeks to kill him, he is hunted and hounded. He is driven from pillar to post. He is forced to hide in the forests and caves of the earth to escape the king's wrath. During this time David describes himself in the following ways: (1) I am hunted like a partridge ([1Sam. 26:20](#)); (2) I am like a pelican of the wilderness ([Ps. 102:6](#)); (3) I am like an owl of the desert ([Ps. 102:6](#)); (4) My soul is among lions ([Ps. 57:4](#)); and (5) They have prepared a net for my steps ([Ps. 57:6](#)).

David becomes weary during these years of running away from Saul. When Saul presses him hard, he withdraws to the cave of Adullam, which is a rocky mountain fastness, southwest of Jerusalem, in a valley between Philistia and Hebron.

David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him.

And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men [[1Sam. 22:1-2](#)].

A marvelous comparison can be made between David and David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, during this period of his rejection which covered about ten years. This time in David's life compares to the present state of our Lord. You and I are living in the days of His rejection. The world has rejected Christ just as David was rejected and hunted like an animal. Saul, his enemy, was abroad; and our enemy, Satan, is abroad today. We are admonished in [1Peter 5:8](#), "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a

roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." David could say that his "soul was among lions," and we can say the same today. It is during these days that the Lord Jesus Christ is calling out of this world a people for His name. He is calling those who are in distress, those who are in debt, and those who are discontented.

These three classes of men existed in David's day. There were those who were in distress. They were persecuted and oppressed by Saul. David was a long time in breaking with Saul. There were many who were loyal to Saul, but they were finally forced to flee because their lives became endangered. Many fled to David and joined up with him.

If you have felt the whiplash of injustice in the world, if you have felt its unfairness, if you are oppressed and have no place to turn, look to the Lord Jesus Christ. Many people today are trying to find a way out of their troubles and are turning to all kinds of nostrums -- some to drugs, some to drink, and some to suicide. There is one who is calling all of us today. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" ([Luke 19:10](#)). He wants to help you. He can help you. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" ([Heb. 2:18](#)). Are you tested and tempted? Are you in distress? You need a Savior, and He is calling out those who will come to Him this day.

There were others who came to David during this time of rejection who were in debt. Debt is a cancer that destroys under any circumstance. In that day when a man got into debt he could lose his property and he could be sold into slavery. Men should have been protected, but they were not. This man Saul was permitting men to become slaves -- he was not enforcing the Mosaic Law.

Sin has made us debtors to God. Remember that in the prayer Christ taught His disciples, it says, "Forgive us our debts." God alone can forgive us. Forgiveness always rests upon the payment of a debt, and those who were in debt had to flee. David, actually, did not pay the debt, but Christ did. He paid the debt of sin by dying on the Cross. He set us free. That is what the Lord Jesus Christ did for you and for me. If you realize you are a debtor to God and have no means to pay, He will pay that debt for you. You can flee to Him. What a wonderful privilege that is!

The discontented also came to David. This means that they were bitter of soul. The circumstances and experiences of life had soured them. In the past few years I have noticed a restlessness sweeping our land and the world. In some areas it has become a great flood. Masses of people march in the street and protest about this, that, and the other thing. There is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction and discontentment. My friend, life will make you bitter unless you see the hand of God, as did Joseph whose story is told in the final chapters of Genesis.

There is One to whom you can go today. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the rejected King. He is fairer than ten thousand, and He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" ([Matt. 11:28](#)). He also says, ". . . If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" ([John 7:37](#)). As David in exile receives these four hundred distressed, debt-ridden, and discontented men, what a picture he is of the Lord Jesus Christ in this age of His rejection as he is calling out of this world a people to His name.

And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me.

And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold [[1Sam. 22:3-4](#)].

Fleeing to Moab is what another Bethlehem family had done several generations before David. Elimelech, you recall, had taken his family to Moab during a period of famine in Israel. Because of this, Ruth the Moabitess is in the Bible story. The father of David would be the grandson of Ruth the Moabitess, which is undoubtedly the reason the king of Moab grants the couple asylum in Moab. The very fact that David leaves the land of Israel and goes to Moab means he is really a frightened man. Personally, I do not think he should have left Israel, as God would have protected him if he had stayed. His faith wavered a bit as had Abraham's when he went down to Egypt.

Saul Slays The Priests Of God (22:5-19)

And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him;)

Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds;

That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day [[1Sam. 22:5-8](#)].

It sounds like Saul is developing some paranoid tendencies. He has developed a persecution complex. Maybe he is entitled to this complex, because he has discovered that his own son has not been loyal to him. He is wondering why these men in his cabinet have not revealed this fact to him -- as apparently they had not. There is one man, however, who knows where David has fled and he tells Saul what he knows. We have met him before. He was at the tabernacle when David and his men ate the showbread.

Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub.

And he inquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine [[1Sam. 22:9-10](#)].

After Doeg gives Saul his information, Saul decides to go after Ahimelech the priest.

Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob: and they came all of them to the king.

And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I am, my lord.

And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?

Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son in law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house? [[1Sam. 22:11-14](#)].

Saul sent for Ahimelech the priest and the other priests who were in Nob. Saul demanded that Ahimelech explain why he had helped David escape. The priest gave the king a truthful answer. He had the highest motives and was totally unaware that David was not being honest with him. Later on David felt very bad that he had deceived Ahimelech into thinking that he was on a mission for Saul.

Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more.

And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.

And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD [[1Sam. 22:15-17](#)].

In his anger, Saul did not listen to reason but commanded his servants to slay the priests. They hesitated to carry out his order. But Saul had gone so far in his rebellion and sin that he would not stop at anything. So he commanded Doeg to do his dirty work for him.

And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod [[1Sam. 22:18](#)].

This was a serious and awful crime that Saul committed. If God had not rejected him before this, He certainly would have rejected him at this point.

And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword [[1Sam. 22:19](#)].

The bitterness and vengeance of this man Saul was terrible. Bitterness is something that we need to beware of today. We are warned about it in [Hebrews 12:15](#) which says,

"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." When bitterness gets into the hearts of God's people, it is a vicious and an awful thing. I have seen it in churches. I have seen officers of the church use their positions, not to bring glory to Christ, but to vent their spleens, bitterness, vengeance, and hatred against someone else. It is a terrible thing when bitterness takes over, and this is what happened in Saul's case. He was definitely Satan's man. You and I cannot be too sure about a person's salvation -- even when he is active in the Lord's service -- when you see him motivated by a vicious bitterness of heart and soul. It is indeed difficult to cull out the tares from the wheat at a time like that. Such was the case here.

CHAPTERS 23 AND 24

Chapter 23

THEME: God's protection and care of David in exile

David continues to flee with his six hundred men. Jonathan contacts David and "strengthens his hand in God." David spares Saul's life in En-gedi.

David Fights The Philistines (23:1-13)

Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors.

Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? and the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?

Then David inquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah [[1Sam. 23:1-5](#)].

The Philistines, the perpetual enemies of Israel, were robbing the people of Keilah of their grain supply. Notice that David seeks God's will before he attempts to deliver Keilah. David is acting to protect these people, God's people, although he continues to flee from Saul.

When Saul learns that David and his men are contained in a walled city, he rushes his army down to capture them. Again David inquires of the Lord what his course of action should be. The Lord warns him to flee because the men of Keilah will not protect him from Saul -- in spite of the fact that he has been their deliverer.

Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth [[1Sam. 23:13](#)].

That is, David's men scattered -- they didn't move out as an organized army.

Saul Pursues David, And Jonathan And David Make A Covenant (23:14-26)

And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God [[1Sam. 23:14-16](#)].

Notice how faithful and true Jonathan is to his friend David and the things he says to encourage him.

And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house [[1Sam. 23:17-18](#)].

In essence Jonathan is telling David that Saul knows what is going to happen but is fighting it. Saul is, of course, going against God's will. He is in complete rebellion against God. Jonathan, however, is willing to execute God's will. Jonathan's actions reveal that he is a great man. His attitude reminds me of John the Baptist who said of the Lord Jesus Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease" ([John 3:30](#)).

Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? [[1Sam. 23:19](#)].

Saul is determined to ferret out David and is aided by the Ziphites who promise to deliver David to him.

And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them [[1Sam. 23:26](#)].

Saul has David surrounded at this point and would surely have captured him if Saul had not been called home to fight off an invasion of the Philistines. This reveals God's perfect timing, which again saves David's life.

Chapter 24

David Spares Saul's Life At En-gedi (24:1-22)

In chapter 24 David is still on the run. He is being hounded continually by Saul. I think this period of testing in David's life changed him from an innocent shepherd boy to a rugged man who became God's man and ruled over his people.

And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-gedi.

Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats [[1Sam. 24:1-2](#)].

David had gone to a rugged place to hide. Saul went looking for David with an army of three thousand men while David had only six hundred men. Saul's army greatly outnumbered David's, but David made up for this imbalance by using strategy. Also, he knew the area and his men were rugged men, indeed.

And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave [[1Sam. 24:3](#)].

Saul entered the very cave in which David was hiding and went to sleep. Saul's men were on guard, of course, but they were outside the cave, not inside. They permitted the king to have privacy in order that he might have a good nap. So this is the situation: David and his men, and Saul, are inside the cave. Saul's soldiers are outside the cave.

And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily [[1Sam. 24:4](#)].

David quietly slipped up to the sleeping king and trimmed off the lower part of his garment.

And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt [[1Sam. 24:5](#)].

Right away David regretted his act because it would be a source of embarrassment to Saul. Imagine what would happen when Saul awakened, stood up, and found out he was wearing a mini-skirt!

And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD [[1Sam. 24:6](#)].

David respected the office of king, although he may not have respected the man.

May I interject a thought at this particular point. I personally do not feel that the President of the United States, regardless of his party or character, should be made the subject of a cartoon or the object of ridicule. In a democracy, of course, he can be criticized, but to make our president a subject of ridicule, as do some cartoonists and some comedians, is

entirely wrong. Now this is just my personal opinion, but I think that we ought to have more respect for the office than we do. We live in a country that has its faults, but it has been a great country for most of us, and its offices and officers should be respected.

It is interesting to note that although David is being hunted by Saul, David will not lay a hand on him. Why? Because Saul is God's anointed. David is going to let God deal with the king. My, if we could only come to the place where we would let God handle our enemies! As a rule we want to take care of them, but God can do a much better job. We are told in [Romans 12:19](#), "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." When we take things in our own hands, we are no longer walking by faith. We are not trusting God. What we are really saying is, "Lord, we cannot trust You to handle this the way we want it handled, so we are going to do it ourselves." David, however, is going to let God handle Saul.

David is sorry he has cut off Saul's skirt. His conscience disturbs him because he has made the king an object of ridicule.

So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way [[1Sam. 24:7](#)].

Several of David's men had no use for Saul and would have killed him in a minute, but David would not permit it.

David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself [[1Sam. 24:8](#)].

Notice once again that although David may not respect Saul personally, he does have respect for Saul's office.

And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?

Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed [[1Sam. 24:9-10](#)].

David had demonstrated to Saul that he was not seeking his life. Saul had been told, and wrongly so, that David was out to get him. Nothing could have been further from the truth. I think David was very much misunderstood, maligned, and misrepresented by both friend and enemy. David's act of mercy in sparing Saul's life should have made it abundantly clear that he was not seeking the king's life.

As David continues to reason with him, Saul actually weeps.

And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil [[1Sam. 24:16-17](#)].

Now notice Saul's amazing statement.

And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand [[1Sam. 24:20](#)].

This is an amazing confession coming from Saul. Saul realizes that what David has said is true and is greatly moved by the fact that he has spared his life. Then Saul acknowledges the fact that one day David will be king.

Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men get them up unto the hold [[1Sam. 24:21-22](#)].

After their conversation Saul returns home, but David and his men go to their stronghold. David still does not trust Saul. David goes farther and farther into the wilderness to hide, because he knows there will come a day when Saul will come after him again. I am of the opinion that Saul is actually demon-possessed at this time. We are told that an evil spirit had come upon him.

Chapter 25

THEME: Samuel dies; David meets Abigail

In this chapter Samuel dies in his retirement. David encounters Nabal and Abigail. David in anger is prevented from the rash act of murdering Nabal and his servants by the presence and diplomacy of Abigail, Nabal's beautiful wife. Nabal dies after a night of drunkenness, and David takes Abigail to wife. She was a good influence in his life.

Samuel Dies (25:1)

And Samuel died: and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran [[1Sam. 25:1](#)].

Scripture is quite brief concerning Samuel's death. It simply says that "all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him." Samuel had been a great man of God; there is no question about that. He was outstanding. He was the bridge between the judges and the kings. He was the last of the judges and the first in the office of prophets. There were, of course, many prophets before Samuel, but he represented the office that continued on through the Old Testament and into the New Testament.

Samuel was also a force for good and probably prevented the full force of Saul's bitterness and hatred from being vented upon David. Samuel was a buffer between David

and Saul. When Samuel died, David went a great distance into the wilderness -- he went farther away from Saul than Elijah ever did from Jezebel.

David And Abigail (25:2-44)

As someone has said, "To be great is to be misunderstood." This certainly applies to David. He was great, and he was misunderstood. Because the world does not know David, it misjudges him. When the name of David is mentioned, immediately there is called to mind his sins of murder and adultery. There are those who inquire, "How could David commit such sin, and yet the Scriptures say that he was a man after God's own heart?" We will have an occasion to answer that question. But instead of questioning God's choice, we ought to investigate David's character. We will find that only those who are small will be critical of David. He is one of the outstanding characters in Scripture. To know him is to love him. I know of no man who presents such nobility of character.

David had a checkered career. He was born a peasant boy in Bethlehem, a son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah. He was brought up a little shepherd boy among seven fine-looking brothers who were older than he. He was passed by. Then one day his life changed. God had not passed him by. God knew his heart.

God does not look on the outward side of a man. God knew David's heart. He was anointed Israel's future king by Samuel. He slew the giant Goliath. As a musician he is called the "sweet psalmist of Israel." He penned the most beautiful poetry written in any language or sung in any tongue. If you have any doubt about it, have you anything to compare with [Psalm 23](#)? David married the princess Michal, the daughter of Saul. He was loved by Jonathan, the son of Saul. Never did a man have a friend like Jonathan. David became an outlaw. He gathered together a band of men during this time, and they lived in mountain strongholds. He pretended he was mad, like Hamlet, on one occasion. He finally became king of Judah and then of the entire nation of Israel. We are going to see that his own son led a rebellion against him, and once again he was forced to flee. He lived to see Solomon, his son, anointed king.

Instead of looking at David and Bathsheba and seeing David's sin, I want you to look at something else. Let's forget for the moment Goliath and David's heroic accomplishment and Jonathan's loyal friendship. Instead I want you to see the very simple story of life in this chapter. It reveals the innermost recesses of his soul. It is a story about David and Abigail, and it reveals how human David really was.

And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel;
and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep,
and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife
Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a
beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his
doings; and he was of the house of Caleb [[1Sam. 25:2-3](#)].

It seems that not all of Caleb's offspring turned out well, as we can see from this man Nabal. The name Nabal means "fool." I don't know how he got that name, but he certainly lived up to it. But then, aren't we all born fools? The Scriptures say that man is

born like a wild ass's colt ([Job 11:12](#)). Look at your own life for a moment. Have you ever done anything foolish? I think all of us have done foolish things that we would rather not think about.

Nabal was a fool, but he was a rich man. He had neither honor nor honesty. He was a drunken beast. But he had a beautiful and intelligent wife. That is a rare combination in a woman but a pleasing one. The question is -- how did this man get such a jewel for a wife? Dr. McConkey called the story of Nabal and Abigail "Beauty and the Beast." Frankly, I think her parents made the match. They were impressed by this man's wealth, and it was a case of beauty being sold for gold -- traffic in a human soul. Perhaps you are saying, "That's terrible." It is terrible, but it happens all the time in our contemporary culture. How often it happens we do not know. It is an awful thing.

And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.

And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name [[1Sam. 25:4-5](#)].

David had been protecting Nabal's property. He had quite an army with him, and he could have robbed this man and taken his sheep for food, but he did not. Instead he kept thieves and marauders from getting the sheep. He did many things to assist Nabal. Now that David needs food, he sends his young men to ask for help.

And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased.

And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master [[1Sam. 25:9-10](#)].

Nabal is saying that David has betrayed Saul and that he is disloyal.

Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?

So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings [[1Sam. 25:11-12](#)].

I told you at the beginning that David is redheaded and hot-headed. He is angry now.

And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff [[1Sam. 25:13](#)].

Someone in Nabal's household learned of this and informed Abigail.

But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them [[1Sam. 25:14](#)].

When Abigail heard what had happened between her husband and David's young men, she knew what David would do. So she got together a great deal of food.

Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.

And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.

And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them [[1Sam. 25:18-20](#)].

Abigail went out to meet David with food before he could get to Nabal because David would have killed him.

Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good [[1Sam. 25:21](#)].

David's intention was to kill every man that belonged to Nabal.

And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,

And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid [[1Sam. 25:23-24](#)].

Around the hill David came, riding at full tilt, flushed with anger, and probably saying to himself, "I'll get that fellow. He can't treat me that way." Then he looks down the road and sees a woman coming on a little donkey. He sees all the foodstuff, and his men are hungry. He halts his band of men before this beautiful woman. For the first time David, God's anointed, is face to face with a noble woman who means well by him. She bows before David. She gets right down in the dust and asks David to take his revenge upon her because she is Nabal's wife. She is wise in what she does because David is not about to do anything to a beautiful woman with an appeal like she made! Then she apologizes for the fact that her husband is a fool and a brute.

Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send [[1Sam. 25:25](#)].

A "man of Belial" is a worthless person.

Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days [[1Sam. 25:26-28](#)].

This was just the beginning of David's career. Sin came into his life later on, but up to this point David's life was as clean as a hound's tooth. He has lived for God, and he is attempting to please God. Abigail admires him for it.

Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling [[1Sam. 25:29](#)].

Although she does not mention him by name, Abigail is speaking about Saul as the one who is pursuing David. Then she says one of the most remarkable things about David, "But the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God."

Friend, that is exactly the position of the believer in Christ Jesus. John, in his first epistle, calls Christ "Eternal Life." He says, "For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" ([1John 1:2](#)). When you and I trust Him as Savior, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of believers. Paul says, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" ([1Cor. 12:13](#)). You and I are brought into the body of believers -- the body of Christ -- by our faith in Christ. We are said to be in Christ. And there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. So we are bound in the bundle of life with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then Abigail said, "The souls of thine enemies God shall sling out." David knew all about slingshots, and what he had done to Goliath was well known in Israel.

Then Abigail continues.

And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel;

That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid [[1Sam. 25:30-31](#)].

Abigail is saying to David, "Don't hold what my husband has done against us. You are going to be king." I can just see David sitting astride his horse, looking down at this woman who is actually down in the dust. She is a beautiful and noble woman.

And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:

And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand [[1Sam. 25:32-33](#)].

David was thankful to this woman for her wisdom in keeping him from an act that would have caused him regret.

So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person [[1Sam. 25:35](#)].

David accepted Abigail's food, advice, and person.

And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.

But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone.

And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died [[1Sam. 25:36-38](#)].

Nabal had a big party that night -- he was a swinger. He had sobered up the next morning, and Abigail told him what had transpired the day before with David. Then "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone." He not only had a headache, he had a heartache too. What happened to him? Did he have a heart attack? It is well that God moved Abigail to intervene. David's hands would have been red with blood, and God didn't want them that way.

Now what is David going to do? There is a beautiful widow who lives in the desert of Paran. She is, actually, the only woman who has been a blessing to him.

And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife [[1Sam. 25:39](#)].

When David heard that Nabal was dead, he wanted Abigail for his wife. When she had intercepted David on the road, she had said, "When the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid." Well, David could not forget her. Do you know why? She had appealed to the best in him. She had advised him, and he knew her advice was right. He knew he loved her, and I think it was love at first sight.

David also recognized the hand of God. God can use beauty. That day on the road, as he thanked her for her good advice, two great souls stood in the presence of each other. Now that Nabal was dead, David asked her to become his wife, and she did. This marks the beginning of another phase of David's life.

Now something else took place of which God did not approve.

David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives.

But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim [[1Sam. 25:43-44](#)].

Sin entered into his life, friend. He was a rugged man and he lived a rugged life, but one day he became a murderer. Since God called him a man after His own heart, does that mean He approved of his life? No. We will see that when David longed to build God a magnificent temple, God had to tell him "no." God would not permit him to build the temple because of the sin in his life.

CHAPTERS 26 AND 27

Chapter 26

THEME: David again spares Saul's life; David retreats to the land of Philistia

David again spares Saul's life in the wilderness of Ziph. Note the contrast between Saul and David. Obviously Saul knows that David is God's choice, but he seeks to slay him. David recognizes that Saul is the anointed king, and he spares him.

David Again Spares Saul's Life (26:1-25)

And the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon?

Then Saul arose, and sent down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph [[1Sam. 26:1-2](#)].

Here goes Saul on another campaign, another crusade, to try to destroy David. This is what happened. David fled into the wilderness, and Saul went after him. David was a great soldier and he knew the terrain, which made him an expert general. He also had loyal men who were willing to die for him and with him. Saul did not know the terrain. Added to that, his followers were not as loyal as they could be, and Saul certainly suspected them.

David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed [[1Sam. 26:4](#)].

David could not believe that Saul would come into territory that was unfamiliar to him. It was a military blunder of such proportions that David sent spies out to see if Saul really was in the area. His scouts reported that Saul was indeed in the wilderness.

And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him [[1Sam. 26:5](#)].

David was in a position to observe where Saul and his men were, while he and his men were able to hide in the wilderness.

Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee.

So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him [[1Sam. 26:6-7](#)].

David and Abishai went into Saul's camp and looked around. Saul was sleeping in a trench, surrounded by his men. At the head of his bed he had stuck his spear in the ground.

Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time [[1Sam. 26:8](#)].

Abishai was saying to David, "If you just let me at him, I will strike him once. One blow is all I need, and you will be rid of your enemy."

And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless? [[1Sam. 26:9](#)].

Once again David has the opportunity to kill Saul, but he refuses. He will not raise his hand against the Lord's anointed.

David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish [[1Sam. 26:10](#)].

David says, "God will have to take care of him." David is acting upon the principle found in [Hebrews 10:30](#), ". . . Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord."

The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them [[1Sam. 26:11-12](#)].

What David did was not difficult. He took Saul's spear and cruse of water, and no one wakened because the Lord had caused a deep sleep to fall upon Saul and his men.

Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space being between them [[1Sam. 26:13](#)].

Now David withdrew from Saul's camp, but he did not go back to his men. Instead he went way over on the other side of Saul's camp and stood on the top of a hill. It was a place where he could easily escape if anyone came after him.

And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king?

And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord.

This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD'S anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster.

And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king [[1Sam. 26:14-17](#)].

Frankly, I think David is being sarcastic with Abner, who is Saul's captain and should have been protecting him. David is ridiculing Abner. David is telling him that the king could have been destroyed. About this time the king and his men begin to wake up, and they wonder what has happened. Then David says, "Where is Saul's spear and cruse of water? They are gone." David probably held them up and said, "Look, I've got them. I could have slain Saul, but I did not." And that is the important thing: David did not slay the king. He had a wonderful attitude about the whole thing. God was going to handle this affair as far as David was concerned. It may be easy for us to criticize David, but do we today let God handle our enemies? We try to take things in our own hands and try to answer our accusers and deal with them ourselves. God says, "Let Me handle the situation, and you walk by faith. Trust Me." We are going to find out that David trusted the Lord, and He took care of Saul in time.

Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place [[1Sam. 26:25](#)].

Although again Saul admitted he was wrong and gave up his pursuit of David, David knew it was only a temporary respite.

We find that David's heart is becoming very discouraged. He is weary of this continual running away and hiding in the dens of the earth.

Chapter 27

David Retreats To The Land Of Philistia (27:1-6)

And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand [[1Sam. 27:1](#)].

This is obviously a departure from the high plain of faith that characterizes the life of David. It is a period of just letting down. We find that the same thing happened to Abraham. It happened to Isaac, and it happened to Jacob. In fact, it seems that most of God's men have had this low period in their lives.

There is a message for you and me in this chapter. Perhaps this very day you are faced with problems. Perhaps you have been in a dark valley for a long time, and you wonder if you will ever come through it. There seems to be no solution to your problems. Well, if it is any comfort to you, there are many others who have been in the same valley -- it is a well-worn route. This man David walked that path long before you and I got here. This is one of the reasons David has been such a help to me in my own Christian life. I can certainly sympathize with him. It looks as though he may spend the rest of his life running and will finally be slain by Saul.

And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath.

And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife.

And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him.

And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?

Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day [[1Sam. 27:2-6](#)].

Here is David -- discouraged, despondent -- doing something he should not have done. He leaves the land of Israel and goes to live among the Philistines. There is nothing in this chapter that would reveal that David is a man of God.

Chapter 28

THEME: Saul consults witch of En-dor

Saul's interview with the witch of En-dor poses and provokes many questions. The primary one relates to Samuel. Did she bring Samuel back from the dead? Several explanations have been forthcoming: (1) Some expositors dismiss it as a fraud, taking the position that the witch was a ventriloquist; (2) others maintain that an overwhelming desire to communicate with dead loved ones makes the bereaved victims of deceit; and (3) a third group believe that the witch actually brought Samuel back from the dead. This is untenable, and it is inconsistent with the rest of Scripture.

The Philistines Plan An Attack, And Saul Consults The Witch Of En-dor (28:1-19)

And it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men.

And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.

Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa [[1Sam. 28:1-4](#)].

Once again the Philistines were gathering their armies together to fight Israel. David gave no distinct promise that he would help them in their war with the Israelites -- he certainly would avoid it if he could. Saul gathered his troops together at Gilboa.

And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled.

And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor [[1Sam. 28:5-7](#)].

Since God was not speaking to Saul, he turned to Satan in desperation. The witch of En-dor was probably a ventriloquist. I think she was partly phony and partly given over to spiritism.

I would like to dwell on the subject of spiritism for a moment. We are living in a day of frills and thrills in religion. One of the avenues which thrill-seekers are exploring is modern spiritism, or ancient necromancy. Of course, the strongest argument they have is the witch of En-dor. They say she brought Samuel back from the dead. The question is, "Did Samuel really come back from the dead and communicate with Saul?" If so, it is the only instance of such a thing in the Scripture.

Before answering this question, I want you to look at some important background material. Scripture positively condemns the practice of necromancy. This is what [Deuteronomy 18:9-14](#) says about the subject: "When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt

possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." We are living in a day when there is a great deal of practice in the areas just mentioned.

In Time magazine, several years ago, two fortunetellers were listed. According to the magazine, most of the Hollywood stars consulted them in order to find out what the future held for them. We are seeing a revival of this today, but it has been going on a long time. Back in 1947 The Guardian, a publication of the Church of England, ran this article: "In spite of the large amount of fraud, fake, deceit, and thought-reading, conscious or unconscious, that the investigator of psychic research has to contend with, there remains a nucleus of genuine matter that cannot be explained with our present knowledge except by accepting the hypothesis that human personalities exist through death, and that certain persons have the power and gift of contacting them. Churches have nothing to fear from genuine psychic phenomena." It is amazing that since then there has been a growing interest in this matter of looking at the stars. The so-called science of ESP has also been growing. Many people have purchased horoscopes. Millions of dollars are going into the pockets of astrologers annually.

May I say to you that the Word of God absolutely condemns this sort of thing, and God has judged nations in the past because of it. He even put His own people out of the land for turning from Him to these different abominations. My friend, these are the dangerous practices of the hour. The Scriptures warn us of the danger and predict that there will be an outbreak of it.

You will find in the account of Lazarus, the beggar, and the rich man ([Luke 16:19-31](#)) that the rich man was strictly forbidden to return to the living. He was told that he could not. Paul was caught up to heaven and silenced -- he could not tell what he had seen ([2Cor 12:2-4](#)). In [2Thessalonians 2:9](#) Paul says, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." Paul, writing to a younger preacher, says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" ([1Tim. 4:1](#)). We are seeing an increasing number of churches (they are called churches) where Satan is actually worshiped. This is something that the Word of God says will increase in the last days.

Now we find Saul going to the witch of En-dor.

And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.

And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.

Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel.

And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul.

And the king said unto her, be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth [[1Sam. 28:8-13](#)].

Notice that this frightens the old witch. She sees supernatural creatures coming out of the ground.

And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself [[1Sam. 28:14](#)].

If you read the account carefully, you will realize that Saul did not see Samuel. It was the witch, who may never have seen Samuel alive, who said she saw an old man covered with a mantle. Of course they jumped to the conclusion it was Samuel. When they did, he answered as Samuel -- because demons can impersonate. Saul has laid himself wide open for Satan, and Satan has moved in.

And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do [[1Sam. 28:15](#)].

Saul is abandoned by God, and he is desperately afraid of the advancing Philistines.

Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?

And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David:

Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day.

Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the land of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines [[1Sam. 28:16-19](#)].

It is interesting to note that nothing new is added. Saul does not get any new information. Samuel, before his death, had already pronounced the death, the destruction, and the rejection of Saul. Certainly Saul did not gain any comfort, any direction, or any new information from his excursion into the spirit world.

This reminds me of an account related by one of the friends of Job. By the way he introduces it, you would think that he had been given some tremendous revelation. Listen to him: "Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?" ([Job 4:12-17](#)). After this man had this tremendous experience and went through these gyrations, what came out of it that was new? Nothing! "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?" That is a self-evident truth. The spirit revealed nothing new!

It is obvious from the account of the witch of En-dor that God was not in it. To begin with, God would not call Samuel up -- Saul makes it clear that God was no longer speaking to him. Was Satan able to call up Samuel? That, of course, is the question.

In Scripture we need to understand that only Christ ever communicated with the dead. He alone can speak to the dead. This man Saul had been abandoned by God. As far as he is concerned, heaven is silent. And so Saul turns to hell. Now did Samuel appear to Saul? Several explanations have been offered. There are those who dismiss the entire incident as a fraud. They do not believe anything about it was genuine. They say the witch was a ventriloquist and put on the whole show. I think she was a fraud, too, but because she was as frightened as Saul at what happened, we can't rule out the supernatural.

Houdini, in his day, said he could duplicate 95 percent of the so-called supernatural things that spiritualism claimed it could and did do. Granted that 99 percent of it is fraud, what about the rest of it? I believe that what happened at En-dor was supernatural, but I do not believe God had a thing to do with it. There is, of course, another explanation for what happened and that is the desire of loved ones to communicate with those that have gone before. Both Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Conan Doyle lost sons in war and wanted to see them. I believe even these men were taken in by spiritualism. Also, many others are deceived because of their strong desire to see their loved ones who are dead.

Kipling wrote a poem that I think is the answer to this.

The road to En-dor is easy to tread
For Mother or yearning Wife.
There, it is sure, we shall meet our Dead
As they were even in life.
Earth has not dreamed of the blessing in store
For desolate hearts on the road to En-dor.
Whispers shall comfort us out of the dark --
Hands -- ah, God! -- that we knew!
Visions and voices -- look and hark! --
Shall prove that our tale is true,
And that those who have passed to the further shore
May be hailed -- at a price -- on the road to En-dor. . . .
Oh, the road to En-dor is the oldest road
And the craziest road of all!
Straight it runs to the Witch's abode,

As it did in the days of Saul,
And nothing is changed of the sorrow in store
For such as go down the road to En-dor!
-- Rudyard Kipling

There are those who say that the witch actually brought Samuel from the dead. I say to you that such an explanation is neither tenable nor consistent with the rest of Scripture. We are told in [1Chronicles 10:13](#), "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it." God condemned the thing that Saul did.

There are those who use [1Samuel 28:12](#) to prove that God caused Samuel to appear. "And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul." I do not hold with this theory. I believe it was an impersonation by a false spirit rather than Samuel who appeared. God no longer spoke to Saul. Worse still, Saul no longer spoke to God. The dead cannot communicate with the living. This was satanic from beginning to end.

When I say that the dead cannot communicate with the living, there is one exception. Do you want to hear a voice from the dead? Well, listen to this: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" ([Rev. 1:17-18](#)). It is the Lord Jesus Christ who holds the keys of the grave and of death. He has come back from the dead.

I have a question for you: Why do you want to traffic with a witch or a spirit who you think can give you inside information? If that one is actually in touch with the spirit world, the information comes from hell, not from heaven -- for hell is speaking to this earth as well as heaven. Any communication coming that route which looks supernatural (and it may be supernatural) comes from the pit of hell. Why not listen to the Man who went down through the doorway of death and came back? He is the only One who made a two-way thoroughfare of it. He says, "I was dead. I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of the grave." If you want any information, go to Him. If you want help, go to Him. If you want salvation, go to Him. He went down through the portal of death for you and for me, and He came out in mighty power which He makes available to His own.

CHAPTERS 29 AND 30

Chapter 29

THEME: David's life among the Philistines

As we saw in chapter 27, David had become so discouraged and despondent because of Saul's determination to kill him that he left the land of Israel. God had not told him to leave any more than He had told Abraham to leave the land. On the part of both these men it was a lapse in faith. So David stepped out of the land and moved over into the country of Philistia.

The Philistines were definitely the enemies of his people. David spent some time there and became a good friend of the king of Gath, who was one of the lords of the Philistines. Then when war broke out between the Israelites and the Philistines, David found himself in an awkward spot. Since he had become friends with at least one of the lords of the Philistines, he felt he should be his ally. But God intervened and prevented David from attacking his own people. This was a narrow escape for him. Had God not intervened, David would have done something that he would have regretted the rest of his life.

Christian friend, we do not realize how many times God intervenes in our lives. We sometimes overstep the boundaries God has set, and we are not where we should be, or we are not doing what we should be doing. When we make errors in judgment, many times God graciously intervenes to keep us from committing a terrible sin that we would regret the rest of our lives. I am sure you can look back upon your life and recall many such occasions.

Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek:
and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel.

And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by
thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rereward with
Achish [[1Sam. 29:1-2](#)].

When war was about to break out, David and his men marched with the Philistines. All the lords of the Philistines knew David, and when they saw him marching with them, they did not like it -- and rightly so. I am sure that if you saw a person who had been your enemy suddenly turn and be on your side, you would want to make sure that he was not going to come up from the rear and attack you. That sometimes happens even among Christian brethren today. When a formerly unfriendly person suddenly becomes friendly, you wonder if he is really your friend or whether he has some ulterior motive in mind.

Philistines Distrust David To Battle Israel (29:3-11)

Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews
here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this
David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with
me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him
since he fell unto me unto this day? [[1Sam. 29:3](#)].

This Philistine lord, Achish, could find no fault with him because David had been a loyal fellow. He had never attempted to undermine him -- David was not that kind of man. I think one of the tragedies in our Christian circles is men who attempt to undermine other Christians.

And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the
princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return,
that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him,
and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be
an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto
his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? [[1Sam. 29:4](#)].

This is the way the Philistine lords reasoned, and there is a certain amount of logic in it. It could have been that David wanted to make peace with Saul, and what better way to do it than to turn and fight against the Philistines during the battle with Israel? That would certainly reconcile him to Saul. Since these men did not know David, they cannot be blamed for the position that they took.

Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances,
saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?
[[1Sam. 29:5](#)].

These Philistine lords had heard about David; they knew he could be a formidable foe. So I believe their position was a reasonable and logical one. Achish, however, had full confidence in David.

Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not.

Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines [[1Sam. 29:6-7](#)].

Achish is outvoted and outnumbered. The others will not have David, although Achish has confidence in him. In order to have harmony in their midst, Achish asks David to leave. This, my friend, is nothing but the providence of almighty God. It delivers David from fighting his own people.

And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? [[1Sam. 29:8](#)].

Although King Saul was David's enemy at the time, David would never turn against his own people. However, David's lapse of faith in stepping out of the land meant he was also stepping out of the will of God. This opened the way for sin to come into his life. The interesting thing is, Christian friend, that when a child of God steps out of the will of God, he will not lose his salvation, but he will have trouble.

In California, after World War II, a man came to see me. He was a young man when he was discharged from the service and was out of the will of God. While in this condition, he married an unsaved girl. His life had been a living hell from that day until the day I talked to him. His only solution to the problem was to get a divorce. I told him, "Don't get a divorce. Let her go if she wants to leave you, but stick it out, brother. This is what happened to you when you stepped out of God's will." You see, the child of God will not lose his salvation when he steps out of God's will, but he may get something he will wish he did not have. You will always get into trouble when you step out of the will of God. David stepped out of God's will and was about to commit an awful sin when God intervened.

So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel [[1Sam. 29:11](#)].

Jezreel is in the north. If you have a good map, you ought to take a look at the geography at this point. It will make clearer a great deal of what is happening. Jezreel is near the Valley of Esdraelon. In fact, I would say it is part of it. It is here that the Scriptures tell us the last great War of Armageddon will be fought. It is being used as a wonderful fertile valley today.

As the Philistines go on up to Jezreel, David and his men start back home to Ziklag. It will not be a joyful homecoming, as we shall see.

Chapter 30

David Fights Amalekites For Destroying Ziklag (30:1-17)

While David and his men were away for home, an enemy from the south, the Amalekites, invaded the Philistine country and destroyed Ziklag. You will note by your map that Ziklag is way down in the south -- even south of Beer-sheba -- in the Philistine country.

And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burned it with fire;

And had taken the women captives, that were therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way.

So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives [[1Sam. 30:1-3](#)].

Can you appreciate the position of David and his six hundred followers? They had returned to Ziklag, the city which had become their home, expecting to be reunited with their families. They returned to find it burned with fire and deserted. David and his men were distraught. They had lost their wives and children! As far as they knew, their loved ones had been slain.

Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep.

And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite [[1Sam. 30:4-5](#)].

This came as a great blow and a sorrow to David. Among the missing loved ones was his wife Abigail. You remember that Abigail had been married to a very rich man whose name was Nabal (meaning "fool"). After he had died, David had taken her to wife. She was the good part of David's life, and she was the only woman who was a blessing to him.

And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for

his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God [[1Sam. 30:6](#)].

David was greatly distressed, not only because he lost his loved ones, but because his men spoke of stoning him. Because David was the leader, they blamed him for leaving Ziklag and going with the Philistines. David had made a blunder, a great blunder.

Most folk think of David as the shepherd boy who slew Goliath. Also they remember the black side of his life, the great sin he committed with Bathsheba. What they don't realize is that David was very much a human being like the rest of us. He made many blunders just like we do. He made a mistake when he left Israel to live among the Philistines. Now his men are ready to stone him "because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters." Notice they do not seem to be grieving for their wives. Do you know why? They think their wives have been slain but that their children are still alive. As the common colloquialism says it, David was between a rock and a hard place. He was between the devil and the deep blue sea. He was in a bad spot. He has lost his loved ones. His own followers, under this great emotional strain of having lost their loved ones, want to stone him. "But David encouraged himself in the LORD his God." This is one of the most wonderful statements ever made.

Friend, there are times in our lives when the circumstances will not produce any joy or happiness. There are times when we find ourselves in dark places, like David. We look about, and the situation looks hopeless. What should we do? Be discouraged? Give up? Say we are through? Friend, if we are children of God, we will encourage ourselves in the Lord. We will turn to Him at times like this. Sometimes the Lord puts us in such a spot so we will turn to Him. He wants to make Himself real to us. It was during times like these that David wrote some of his most helpful psalms. When troubles come, you can thumb your way through the Psalms and find where David is encouraging himself in the Lord. Several times he says, "The LORD is good . . . Let the redeemed of the LORD say so." David found this to be true.

And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David [[1Sam. 30:7](#)].

The ephod was a portion of the high priest's garments which speaks of prayer. This garment went over the garment that the regular priest wore. The ephod set the high priest apart. It was the garment he wore when he went into the golden altar of prayer. It had two stones, one on each shoulder, on which were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel: six on one shoulder and six on the other. In other words, the high priest came to the altar of prayer bearing Israel on his shoulders. This is a picture of Christ, our Great High Priest, who carries us on His shoulders. Do you remember His story of that little sheep which got lost? What did the shepherd do? He put that lamb on his shoulders and brought him back. I do not know who you are or where you are, my friend, but I do know that the Lord is prepared to come and get you, put you on His shoulders, and bring you back to the fold. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" ([Heb. 7:25](#)).

And David inquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for

thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all
[[1Sam. 30:8](#)].

With the ephod, the garment of prayer, David went to God for direction. He talked to his High Priest, the One who was his Shepherd. David appealed to his Lord, and the Lord encouraged him to go after the enemy.

So David went, he and the six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed.

But David pursued, he and four hundred men: for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor [[1Sam. 30:9-10](#)].

All provisions had been taken, and these men were absolutely faint. Two hundred of them could not make the trip because they had marched double time.

And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water [[1Sam. 30:11](#)].

On their way after the enemy, they found an Egyptian in the field. He was sick and told David he was the servant of one of the Amalekite leaders. When he got sick, they left him to die. David had overtaken this man, but he has yet to overtake the enemy. He wants to know where they are. The Egyptian servant says he will tell David what he wants to know if David promises not to return him to his master. David assures him that he will not be sent back to his master. The Egyptian tells David what had happened at the burning of Ziklag, then leads him to the Amalekites.

David makes a surprise attack upon the Amalekites as they are in revelry, enjoying the victory and the spoils they have taken.

And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah.

And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled [[1Sam. 30:16-17](#)].

Only four hundred of the young men had transportation and were able to get away from David and his men. When the battle was over, David returned to Ziklag, along with the wives and children and all the flocks and herds that had been captured.

There was an argument among David's men as to whether the men who has not participated in the battle were entitled to any of the spoils. David put down a principle here, revealing his fairness which made him the kind of man God could use. The two hundred men who were not able to make the trip and do battle were to share equally in the booty. That revealed justice on the part of David.

Chapter 31

THEME: Saul and Jonathan die in battle

We have now come to the final chapter of 1 Samuel. The Philistines are fighting against Israel. Thank the Lord that David is not engaged in this battle. As you recall, the providence of God intervened to keep him out of it. Because the Philistines did not trust him to fight with them, he had withdrawn and returned to Ziklag. There he found his city looted and burned and the women and children taken captive. While David and his men are hunting down the Amalekites, Israel is fleeing before the Philistines. They are being defeated in this battle because they are out of the will of God. As we have seen, when the Philistines came against Saul and he asked God for direction, God was silent. That is the reason Saul resorted to the witch of En-dor. Because of his rebellion and sinfulness, God did not answer him and is not protecting him now.

Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa [[1Sam. 31:1](#)].

The battle goes against Israel from the very first.

And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchi-shua, Saul's sons.

And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers [[1Sam. 31:2-3](#)].

It is the beginning of the end for Saul. First he was hit in battle by an archer. Apparently it was someone who did not recognize that he had hit the king. It was, shall we say, a real bull's-eye. It is also tragic that Jonathan was slain in this battle. This is remarkable because on another occasion when Jonathan was fighting the Philistines, he slew 250 of the enemy at one time. This shows how hopelessly outnumbered Israel was at this time. This could well have been a battle in which David and Jonathan would have been on opposite sides, but God had intervened.

So we find that Saul is wounded.

Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it [[1Sam. 31:4](#)].

When Saul saw that he was mortally wounded, he felt that the enemy would come and abuse him and taunt him. I think he was right. As we have seen, Saul was a proud, egotistical man, and he did not feel that such an end was becoming to him. His armor-bearer was afraid to lay a hand on the king when Saul asked him to thrust him through with a sword. So Saul took a sword and fell upon it. It looks as if Saul was a suicide case.

Was it really a suicide?

And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together.

And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa.

And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people [[1Sam. 31:5-9](#)].

We begin to see now, with Saul's armour being sent around, why he tried to get David to wear it when he fought Goliath. Had David won the battle wearing Saul's armor, the king would have gotten the credit for the victory. A case in point involves one of his sons. When Jonathan won a victory, instead of giving him credit for it, Saul blew the trumpet in the land and took the credit himself.

And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul;

All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.

And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days [[1Sam. 31:10-13](#)].

This concludes the Book of 1 Samuel. Someone says, "Well, there wasn't such a mystery about the death of Saul after all." We are not through with this story yet. We will pick it up again in the book of 2 Samuel. We are going to find that Saul spared the Amalekites, and Samuel rebuked him for it. He told Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." God wanted obedience, and Saul's heart never bowed to almighty God. It is interesting that Saul spared the Amalekites, and we are going to find that it may have been the Amalekites who actually killed Saul. "But," someone says, "we have already read the record that says the Philistines killed Saul. An archer shot him, and he was mortally wounded. He tried to get his armor-bearer to kill him, but the man would not. Finally, Saul fell on his own sword. Isn't that the explanation? Isn't it a closed case? Wasn't it all wrapped up by the Beth-shan police department?" I don't think so. Second Samuel is going to give us some more information.

Bibliography

(For Bibliography to 1 Samuel, see Bibliography at the end of 2 Samuel.)